

*City of Gautier,
Mississippi*



Strategic Plan 2013-2018

Nature's Playground

Welcome to Gautier, home to the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College Jackson County Campus. Gautier City Council is proud to present its 5-Year Strategic Plan, adopted _____, 2012.

Administration

City Council Members

HONORABLE MAYOR –
Tommy Fortenberry

COUNCILMAN WARD 5 –
Adam Colledge

COUNCILMAN WARD 4 – Scott
Macfarland

COUNCILMAN WARD 3 –
Gordon Gollott

COUNCILMAN WARD 2 – Hurley Ray Guillotte

COUNCILMAN WARD 1 – Johnny Jones

COUNCILWOMAN AT-LARGE – Mary Martin



Appointed Members

CITY MANAGER – Samantha D. Abell

CITY CLERK – Teresa Montgomery, Interim

CITY ATTORNEY – Robert Ramsay

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LETTER FROM THE CITY MANAGER

Though Gautier is now 26 years old, in some respects we're younger than our years. Until recently, economic and political circumstances have impeded Gautier's development as a coastal, college town. Ideally located between the industrial and tourism hubs of the state of Mississippi, with two championship golf courses, thousands of acres of parklands and shorelines, and home to the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College's Jackson County Campus, Gautier has long been the Gulf Coast tourists' head-scratcher: Why don't we offer more? Gautier has not lived up to our potential. Here's a snapshot why:



At Gautier's incorporation in 1986, the city incurred major capital costs. In 2002, city leaders seized an opportunity to dramatically increase the tax base by annexing the Interstate-10/Highway 57 interchange. The land grabs to the west, and also lands to the northeast, nearly tripled the city's land area and doubled its population. However, the annexation required Gautier assume water and sewer loans and also absorb the Gautier Utility District which had served unincorporated areas. These debts made affording new capital projects difficult.

Three years later, Hurricane Katrina hit the coast. The resulting disinvestment, out-migration, and devastated infrastructure set Gautier back to a government in its infancy. Lacking the political and community organization of its neighboring cities, Gautier failed to capitalize on federal reconstruction dollars after Katrina. Resulting revenue losses and indebtedness created turnover in city leadership that further impeded Gautier's development and also its political influence on a state and national level. In subsequent years, Gautier necessarily focused efforts on providing city services to the annexed areas.

In 2010, Gautier at last began building economic momentum by strategically focusing development efforts on our undeveloped interstate and our town center, and capitalizing on grass-roots community projects. Results are that Gautier is now turning heads for our 16-acre medical campus at I-10 and Highway 57, and also our town center master plan, anchored by a \$20 million dollar Tax Increment

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Financing District and plans for a redeveloping mall. In the next year, Gautier will take the same strategic approach towards our water and infrastructure, a recreational waterfront and growing our premier parks and recreation programs.

It is with care and attention that as City Manager, I've organized a team of top-level professionals who come to the table with accomplishments under their belts, their sleeves rolled up and with something to prove for the citizens of Gautier. With a business-friendly Mayor and Council, Gautier has adopted the core principles of *People. Prosperity. Integrity.* We invite you to visit with us, and take part in our growing success.

Sincerely,

Samantha D. Abell
City Manager

INTRODUCTION

What is strategic planning? Simply put, strategic planning determines where an organization is going over the next 3-5 years and how it's going to get there.

In our case, it is an effort to systematically identify the major issues faced by the City and to develop strategies to address them. Strategic planning is a process through which we critically evaluate our strengths and weaknesses, as well as outside opportunities and threats, so that strategic issues can be identified and clearly defined. Strategic issues then are key challenges or policy choices that can be addressed by the City; issues over which the City has some control.

The strategic planning process is as important as the plan itself. The process compels our community to develop a consensual vision of the future. The annual town hall meetings and a web-based needs assessment survey, brings forth a broad spectrum of experiences and perspectives.

Successful planning relies on a solid understanding of where we have been as a community, where we are today, and where we hope to be tomorrow. To this end, staff collected input and data from a variety of stakeholders and asked people to identify what they perceived to be the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges facing our community.

Gautier city leaders are proud to present the City of Gautier's Strategic Plan, which serves as an organizational blueprint and foundation of how Gautier will become a safe, vibrant, innovative, healthy city, providing the highest overall quality of life possible.



COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The public outreach for this strategic planning process was ongoing and extensive. The participatory planning process included a neighborhoods community summit, a citywide Town Hall Meeting, two council retreats, and a web-based needs assessment survey.

Community participation consisted of residents, business owners and members of various nonprofit and other community groups. Sessions were held with all city employees and department directors. City of Gautier department directors and managers have played an integral role in internal strategic planning sessions. The participation process associated with this strategic plan was intense and highly effective.

Several topics were introduced during the sessions to gain input on the following issues:

- State of the Community
- Assessment of External Conditions
- Vision of the Future
- Reality Check
- Assessment of Municipal Services
 - What does the City do well?
 - What does the City need to do better?
- Priority Setting

The community participation process provided the community with an opportunity to provide their input and select their priorities. The results of this process for each of the topics are described in great detail in Exhibit II and III.

The community survey demonstrated that Gautier residents have a strong sense of community pride. This was reinforced by the participants of the town hall meeting. A deep connection to its settler history, the kindred frontiersmen culture of fierce independence and the waterfront way of-life remain important community strengths. There is also a general sense of overall improvement in levels and cost of service provided by the City.

VALUES

∅ PEOPLE ∅ INTEGRITY ∅ PROSPERITY

We value government action that is taken openly and believe that responsive government is our first priority. We encourage citizen participation for the betterment of our community and strive to conduct business with integrity to instill public trust.

Quality of Life

We value a safe, family friendly environment in which to build our future and conduct business. We foster recreation, public safety and youth activities, and encourage support of the arts, libraries, and education. We believe in sound economic development, high standard infrastructure and responsible planning for sustainable growth.

Excellence

We value excellence in all things. Professionalism, accountability, and innovation drive our commitment to excellent customer service.

Employees

We value a work environment that emphasizes teamwork, respect and dignity and supports our employees in their efforts to provide excellent customer service.

Diversity

We value diversity in the workplace and in the community.

VISION/MISSION

The comments received by the stakeholders through the outreach process were distilled into the five mission statements that implement the Vision, provided below.

Vision

We strive to achieve efficient and responsible service; a highly trained, competent workforce; and responsible stewardship of resources.

Mission

To enhance the quality-of-life of the citizens of Gautier and our neighborhoods by providing exceptional government services.

- I. Provide a safe environment through the development of partnerships with citizens, community groups and law enforcement, emphasizing crime prevention and a variety of programs aimed at youth.
- II. Create a vibrant community by expanding our economic development efforts striving to improve education, and growing our recreational, cultural, arts and library programs.
- III. Be innovative in seeking solutions, be bold in taking on the challenges of our community and use the entire range of resources, skills and technology available throughout the community for the betterment of all.
- IV. Sustain the economic, environmental and physical health of our community by supporting new medical and health care services; creating a program of sustainable development and fostering continued job creation.
- V. Continue to enhance the quality of life for our residents by embracing our small town spirit, ensuring we maintain strong neighborhoods, valuing and strengthening intergenerational ties among citizens and providing a range of services that support the whole community.
- VI. Encourage community maintenance to aesthetically improve the City.

- VII. Recreational Waterfront. Cultivate public and private investments along the Coastline.
- VIII. Focus on the Town Center Master Plan and I-10/HWY 57 Corridor. Promote economic renewal and strategic development.
- IX. Environmentally Sustainable Local Government Policies. Develop and implement pro-environmental policies.
- X. College Park Community Revitalization. Stimulate further redevelopment opportunities.
- XI. Operational Performance and Efficiency. Focus on improving efficiency and performance.
- XII. Promote Public Safety. Reduce violent crime among youth and adults.
- XIII. Customer Service. Maintain and improve the quality our customers' experiences while recognizing that the City is involved in many other important activities, these eight initiatives will be our focus as we plan future activities and deploy resources.

STRATEGIC GOALS & ACTION PLAN

Based on the Vision/Mission statements and in consideration of the community's comments, staff identified seven categories of actions and their applicable strategic goals for this five-year strategic plan. The categories provide an organizational framework for the strategic actions set forth in the following tables, which are the basic elements of this effort and will provide a metric to determine our progress in addressing the concerns, desires and priorities of the community.

1. Youth Engagement

Stakeholder Comments: The stakeholders who participated in the strategic planning process identified concerns with limited opportunities and activities for youth as a top priority for immediate action by the City. Their comments included:



- Foster and engage youth by providing activities, programs, facilities, entertainment, recreational, educational and job opportunities.
- Target ages 11 –18 with activities, jobs, youth center and mentors.
- Partner with other organizations such as the school district to provide internships and share recreation facilities.
- Provide safe places for kids to hang out and expand recreational activities.

Mission Reference: Although providing opportunities and programs to foster and engage youth is a component of all Mission statements, the most applicable statements include #1, Safe Community and #4, Quality of Life.

Strategic Goal Youth 1: Collaborate with stakeholders and service providers to assess existing capacity and programs, identify needs, and make recommendations for improvement and/or expansion.

Strategic Goal Youth 2: Collaborate with service providers to continue and expand programs and services that encourage youth engagement, parental education, participation and involvement.

Strategic Goal Youth 3: Engage youth in crime prevention strategies and enhance youth programs that promote prevention and diversion from criminal or gang activities.