

Volunteer Information for Hancock County Chamber of Commerce

Maps:

Location of the Chamber, [here](#).

Lodging Suggestions:

[Hollywood Casino Bay St. Louis](#)

711 Hollywood Blvd

Bay Saint Louis, MS 39520

\$92/night; Average rates do not include service fees, applicable taxes, extra guest charges (if applicable), or other non-room hotel charges.

Distance to the Chamber: 1.16 mi

Driving directions from Gulfport-Biloxi Regional Airport:

- Turn left out of airport onto Airport Rd heading east.
- Turn right onto US-49 N.
- Merge onto I-10 W toward New Orleans.
- Take exit 13, toward Bay St. Louis/Picayune.
- Turn left onto Highway 603.
- Turn left onto US-90 east.
- Turn left onto Blue Meadow Rd.
- Turn right onto Casino Magic Drive.

[Diamondhead Resort](#)

103 Live Oak Dr

Diamondhead, MS 39525

\$79-\$86/night; Average rates do not include service fees, applicable taxes, extra guest charges (if applicable), or other non-room hotel charges.

Distance to the Chamber: 2.28 mi

Driving directions from Gulfport-Biloxi Regional Airport:

- Approximate driving time is 21 minutes and distance is 20 miles.

[Coast Inn](#)

404 Highway 90

Waveland, MS 39576

\$79/night; Average rates do not include service fees, applicable taxes, extra guest charges (if applicable), or other non-room hotel charges.

Distance to the Chamber: 2.6 Miles

[Comfort Inn Diamondhead](#)

441 Yatch Club Drive

Diamondhead, MS

Distance to the Chamber: 4.2 Miles

[Key West Inn](#)

Viren Patel

1000 Highway 90

Bay St. Louis, MS 39520

228-466-0444

Fax 228-466-0906

\$ 99.95/night; Average rates do not include service fees, applicable taxes, extra guest charges (if applicable), or other non-room hotel charges.

Car Rentals at Airport:

Avis: 1 (800) 831-2847

Budget: 1 (800) 527-0700

Hertz: 1 (800) 654-3131

National: 1 (800) 227-7368

Thrifty: 1 (800) THRIFTY

Car Rental (Off Airport): Enterprise- 1 (800) 736-8222

For current updates:

- <http://gulfcoastnews.com/>
- <http://www.sunherald.com/mld/sunherald/>
- www.hancockchamber.org
- http://risingfromruin.msnbc.com/the_towns.html

Local Weather:

Click [here](#).

Dress Code:

- Dress casually (jeans are perfectly fine)
- Most residents lost everything, so just having clean clothes is the ticket.
- No suits and ties, please! Someone is bound to get suspicious.
- Shower facilities are available in the men's bathroom at the Business Assistance Center (BAC); bring flip flops to wear while showering (towels/sheets are available)

What to bring:

- Laptops (there is wireless at the BAC)
- Cell phones & chargers
- Cameras, both video & digital
- Soft-luggage instead of hard suitcases (to conserve space)
- Bottled water

Food & Entertainment:

Groceries are available at only two places:

- Wal-Mart on Highway 90 in Waveland
- Choice Supermarket in Diamondhead, about 10 miles from the BAC.

Several restaurants are open:

- Waffle House
- Sonic
- Dominoes
- an Italian and a Chinese restaurant, just across the street from the BAC.
- *Southern Delights* just a short distance from here at the corner of Hwy. 90
- *Dunbar*, good southern cooking, open on a limited basis
- *The Sycamore House*, open for dinner on Thu, Fri and Sat evenings.

Entertainment:

- Casinos in Biloxi (~30-40 miles east)

Directions to the Business Assistance Center:

- Exit 13 off of I-10 (the Bay St. Louis exit)
- Left off the exit and head South on Hwy 603
- Drive 5 miles to the intersection of 603 and Hwy 90. Turn left (east)
- Drive approx. 2-3 miles and you'll see a huge "Casino Magic" sign (no longer lit, however.)
- Turn right at the Shell gas station.

The BAC is immediately behind the Shell station, but the front gates are only open M-F, 8-5.

Go through the last set of gates (third of three), which will be open.

Someone will be there to welcome you if they know an ETA.

Hancock County Chamber of Commerce

In 1925, a group of interested citizens who were members of the Bay St. Louis Rotary Club, established the Bay St. Louis Chamber of Commerce. In 1945, it was renamed the Hancock County Chamber of Commerce.

Today, the Chamber is 750 members strong representing close to 10,000 employees in every area of the County. It is a voluntary organization of business, community and governmental leaders who promote the social, civic and economic well-being of Hancock County.

Location & mailing address:
Colonial Plaza
412 Highway 90, Suite 6
Bay St. Louis, MS 39520
Phone (228) 467-9048
Fax (228) 467-6033
lynne@hancockchamber.org

Business Leadership Dedicated to Economic Vitality and Quality of Life

Five areas of focus:

1. Partnerships with other area economic development and business service agencies such as the Hancock County Port & Harbor Commission, The Arts, and the Tourism Commission;
2. Technical Assistance to small businesses through our Business Assistance Center; on site at the Chamber Office you can access resources through the Mississippi Small Business Development Center and the SBA Disaster Loan Program; these resources can refer you to other sources to help your business grow and expand;
3. Public Affairs Advocacy to evaluate, assess, educate and/or represent the business community in any existing or emerging issue;
4. Membership Services to provide visibility and networking; and,
5. Community Development to foster smart growth.

Mission Statement:

The Hancock Chamber is a customer-focused membership organization dedicated to:

- Provide our members value-added benefits;
- Collaborate and meet with other community organizations to achieve mutual goals;
- Represent the members' interests in government and legislative issues;
- Ensure the highest standards for an improved community quality of life;
- In short-to promote the social, civic and economic well-being of the County.

About the Chamber

Reputation: The Hancock Chamber has established a "legacy of leadership", playing a key role in major events that have shaped the region.

Resource: The Hancock Chamber is an indispensable resource for its members and the business community.

Relationships: The Hancock Chamber develops relationships with community organizations committed to planning for and improving our county's future.

Return on Investment: The Hancock Chamber will do what it takes to help its members succeed.

Representation: The Hancock Chamber is the largest business organization in the county, representing nearly 450 area businesses and their 10,000 employees.

Rebuilding the Coast---Better than Ever.

On August 29, 2005, Hancock County, Mississippi's diverse and treasured resources were devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Thousands of homes and close to 1,000 businesses were either damaged or destroyed. Known as Mississippi's West Coast, close to 43,000 called the county and communities of Bay St. Louis, Clermont Harbor, Diamondhead, Kiln, Lakeshore-Ansley, Pearlinton, and Waveland home. Prior to the storm, the area developed a regional reputation as a great place to live, work, play and retire because of its relaxed atmosphere, great food, diverse cultural activities and strong sense of place.

Only weeks following the storm, the Chamber opened the Coast's first Business Assistance Center with the support of state, local and federal partners. This Center has been recognized as a national model for disaster recovery by the US Small Business Administration. The Center was made possible in large part thanks to Coast Electric Power Association, donating their conference center to serve as the site for the new temporary Chamber office and Business Assistance Center. The Chamber has now relocated back to the original office as the "Bold New Chamber" with more services for members under one roof. This "one stop center for business and community recovery" provides local businesses with a myriad of services to get their business back on track. Open five days a week, businesses have access to the Internet, business services and one on one counseling with resources like the SBA Disaster Loan Program, the MS Small Business Development Center, and The Arts-Hancock County. These organizations can also refer you to other resources to help your business grow: the WIN Job Center, the South Mississippi Planning and Development District, SCORE and the MS Contract Procurement Center.

Weekly networking and business information events are held to keep the business community CONNECTED. This program is sponsored by part through a grant from Wal-Mart Corporation.

Governor's Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding Renewal

The Chamber is playing a pivotal role to make these dreams reality as manager of the Governor's Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding and Renewal for Hancock County. If you want to be part of the rebuilding effort, get connected through the Chamber, and let's do it, together. The Chamber coordinates county-wide long term recovery planning through this grass-roots leadership organization. This organization has a Commission and 13 volunteer led committees. It serves as the unified voice for funding needs and to coordinate decision making and implementation.

Hancock County Community Development Foundation

Following Hurricane Katrina, the worst natural disaster this nation has ever seen, the Hancock Chamber established the Foundation to act as an additional funding source to support Hancock Chamber programs that further business and community recovery in Hancock County. The Foundation supports programs that stimulate job creation, foster small business growth and support workforce development. It also makes grants, and cooperates with other grant-making organizations, and coordinates charitable fundraising to support qualified educational and community development programs. The Foundation is a 501 (c) 3 organization. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. To find out more or to make a contribution, contact 228-467-9048 or go on line to www.hancockchamber.org.

Regional Cooperation - Partners for Stennis - Citizens for Space Exploration

The Hancock Chamber takes seriously its responsibility as "regional stewards", advocating on issues affecting the entire Mississippi Coast. The Chamber serves as the manager of the Partners for Stennis organization as an advocate for two state regional cooperation, acting as a catalyst for growth. And, coordinates the annual DC Fly-In each May for regional business leaders to educate Congress on the need to support the robust funding of the NASA budget. The Chamber also represents Hancock County during the Annual Coast Mississippi Legislative Reception held each January to promote the Coast's Legislative Agenda.

Networking Programs

- Business After Hours - the Chamber's most popular networking event held monthly at different venues.
- Ribbon Cuttings & Open House Events - an opportunity to showcase your business to other members and the community through publicity in the Sea Coast Echo and to the 650 members on email.
- Leads Connection - Be part of the Ambassador's Club and showcase the benefits of the Chamber to other businesses. The Club is also forming 20 different business advocates groups to meet regularly to exchange ideas and promote advocacy to support business growth.
- Business & Industry Expo - Two afternoons with action-packed networking--business to business and business to consumers--during the annual show held each September. 95 businesses and close to 1,000 consumers participate annually.
- Business Counseling & Training Programs

- Seminars - Twenty-four programs with topics including sales and marketing, and business assistance resources through the SBA to explain loan programs and through local law firms to provide insight on ways to tap in to the Gulf Opportunity Zone Act for federal tax incentives.
- Resources - One-On-One Business Counseling - Staff on hand from the MS Small Business Development Center (SBDC) designed to help you get a new business started or take your business to the next level.
- Business Resource Center - Access to census information, economic and demographic information, business directories, customized lists and relocation information.

Marketing Opportunities

- Visibility - "Membership Directory & Buyer's Guide" - Print publication listing all members and highlighting the many benefits of Chamber membership. Published annually.
- Chamber Web Site - All members are listed and linked in an online Business Directory at www.hancockchamber.org.
- Referral Network - The Chamber refers hundreds of members each year to companies and individuals looking for products and services. And, through the new web based management system on line, you can track the results.
- CONNECTIONS - The Chamber's membership newsletter that keeps you informed about business and community issues, member news and monthly Chamber events.
- Special Events - Golf Tournament: held in November at The Bridges; Monthly Industry Networking Lunches; Marketing Your Business Post Katrina with the Rotary Club on the third Wed monthly; Annual Membership Meeting & Breakfast each January; Hancock County Salute to Business and Industry Awards Gala held each April; Quarterly State of the Union Breakfast Meetings with elected officials; Hancock County Business & Industry Expo and more.

Leadership Programs Offered by the Hancock Chamber

- Leadership Hancock County - An eight month exclusive development program for emerging leaders.
- Newcomers Welcome Events - Held quarterly for newcomers to become acquainted with and connected to local area contacts.

Katrina Rebuilding

On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Waveland and Bay St Louis were in the direct path of her fury and over the course of the day, what wasn't blown away by her winds, was flooded by her storm surge.

Over half of the Hancock County businesses were damaged or destroyed as were thousands of homes.

But our residents are resilient. The influx of cleanup and construction personnel is creating unlimited opportunities for old and new businesses alike. Jobs are plentiful in all areas of the economy. If you are looking for an opportunity, Hancock County is the place to be.

Our homes may not look as they did before but the rebuilding is moving forward and, before long, we'll look better than ever.

Planning for the Future

The Governor's Commission for Hancock County

The Governor's Commission for Hancock County will centralize, focus, and implement as effectively as possible the massive recovery effort facing Hancock County for the next ten years.

Establishing Phase II of the Governor's Commission provides:

- A unified voice for county-wide, long-term recovery
- A unified voice for funding needs
- Coordination and efficiencies in decision making and implementation

Governor Barbour has stated that Katrina was the worst natural disaster to ever hit the United States. The eye of the storm and a massive 30 plus foot storm surge hit Hancock County directly. When the hurricane was over, more than 40% of Hancock County was under water. Hancock County was devastated more than any other Mississippi county.

The initial Governor's Commission reported out with a number of recommendations. These recommendations are the foundation and the focus of this long term management effort. Much needs to be done as soon as possible and this effort must be done by citizens of Hancock County. Federal assistance has been very helpful but soon will cease. This long term recovery effort will be with us for at least ten years.

The Commission is made up of fourteen members and includes mayors of Bay St. Louis and Waveland, the President of the Board of Supervisors, and at large members from the business leaders of the county. This Commission will have as its primary mission, the development, and the implementation of a long term recovery effort that encompasses all the important efforts required to rebuild Hancock County. This will prove to be a massive

integration and multi-disciplinary effort with many conflicting priorities, the need to consider and discuss new ideas and certainly many compromises.

The Governor's Commission will, as a unified voice of Hancock County

(1) exercise its responsibilities developing an effective plan for the county's long term recovery

(2) be able to better compete, through a single voice, for various funding sources, and

(3) rebuild Hancock County "better than ever".

Business Assistance Center

Like many inventions, the idea for the Business Assistance Center (BAC) was born out of necessity. Because nearly 800 of the 1,400 businesses in Hancock County were damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005, Chamber Director Tish Williams was resolute in her determination to have a place where business owners could come for help. The losses were not only physical; they were emotional as well. To make matters worse, communication was practically non-existent. There was no Internet. Cell phone towers were down. Telephone lines were down. Even the U.S. Postal Service was severely disrupted.

Opening its doors just three weeks after the storm, the Business Assistance Center—located in the Coast Electric Power Association's Conference Center—was a place where business owners could receive help filling out paperwork for the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Small Business Administration. Computers with wireless Internet access were made available to everyone, as was a fax machine and copier. Current information regarding emergency operations was posted daily. Most importantly, the Business Assistance Center provided what was desperately needed: camaraderie and support.

Since then, the BAC has grown to include other support groups: the Small Business Development Center from University of Mississippi, the Arts—Hancock County, Citizens in Action, and the WIN Job Center. It continually hosts groups of volunteers who come to Mississippi to offer their help in our recovery. In essence, it encourages the social, civic, and economic well-being of Hancock County.