

By the Numbers

\$47.6 million Estimated economic output associated with construction of new stadium. This includes total project cost of roughly \$35 million.

\$10 million Potential new annual visitor spending on the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

300,000 Estimated number of people who will attend sporting events and other activities at the stadium each year.

342 Estimated direct and indirect jobs created during the construction phase of the project.

200 Direct, indirect, and induced jobs which will be supported by annual stadium operation. Annual earnings to likely exceed \$3 million.

117 The number of new stadiums which have been built to attract and retain MiLB franchises since 1990.

37 In its first year (2012) of operation, Pensacola's new Double A stadium sold out 37 times, en route to leading the Southern League in attendance.

70% The majority of Double-A games in Biloxi would occur between Sunday and Thursday, attracting important mid-week visitation to the region.

47% The percentage of new MiLB stadiums which are located in downtown settings.

Biloxi's Proposed Downtown Minor League Stadium Represents Opportunity

When Governor Phil Bryant convened the GoCoast 2020 Commission, one of its charges was to identify opportunities (value propositions) and corresponding gaps as part of a process intended to create a roadmap for how potential RESTORE Act funds might be used to strengthen the Mississippi Gulf Coast's \$1.7 billion tourism industry. Six tourism sub-committees comprised of dozens of tourism stakeholders and experts from the region participated, and several gaps were identified. These included:

- A significant lack of family activities available at all price points;
- An inability to attract large sporting events; and
- A lapse of demand for non-weekend hotel rooms.

In May 2013, the Biloxi City Council approved a resolution of intent which might lead to a bond issue for as much as \$21 million which would be used in concert with roughly \$15 million in additional funding (provided by the state of Mississippi through a prior BP grant) to build a minor league baseball stadium which would be situated in downtown Biloxi.

While this document is not intended to represent a thorough study of bringing a professional baseball franchise to Biloxi, there is no question that a successful minor league baseball franchise in Biloxi represents a tremendous opportunity not only for Biloxi, but for the entire Mississippi Gulf Coast.

One need only visit Pensacola or Pearl, Mississippi, for examples of how Double-A Minor League Baseball franchises (Biloxi's stadium would potentially be used for an AA franchise) have proven to be wise investments. In Pearl, home of the Atlanta Braves AA affiliate, the Mississippi Braves, substantial

economic development around the stadium occurred after its ballpark was built, resulting in Pearl's **sales tax base expanding by roughly 25% since opening in 2005**. In Pensacola, where it's AA Blue Wahoo's began play in their new stadium in 2012, Pensacola's sales tax base also expanded, while the franchise led the entire Southern League in attendance and was named Baseballpark.com's Ballpark of the Year. Like Biloxi's proposed site, Pensacola's new stadium is located downtown and both regions share many economic and demographic characteristics. Several other cities, including Birmingham and Indianapolis, have opted to relocate ball fields to city centers in recent years.

Minor league baseball leagues across the country attract more than 40 million visitors annually (the National Football League attracts 20 million), and **a stadium in Biloxi would not only attract 238,000 visitors (assuming 50% occupancy), but it would also attract tens of thousands of other spectators for college baseball games, concerts, and other events—it is likely that many of these visitors would visit Biloxi's existing and new venues both before and after the stadium events**. Additionally, more than half of the scheduled ballgames would likely occur between Sunday and Thursday, providing local hoteliers, casinos, retail outlets, and restaurateurs with needed mid-week business.

Lastly, it should be noted that a new stadium project will qualify for the state's existing Tourism Sales Tax Rebate program, and when combined with anticipated new growth in Biloxi's sales tax base and ticket surcharges, it is feasible that debt service associated with a \$21 million bond issue will be offset with available economic development incentives.