

## 2007 Annual Report City of Meridian

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Design: Kim Gianakos  
Graphic Print & Communication  
Meridian, Mississippi

Printing: Craftsman Printing, Inc.  
Birmingham, Alabama

Photography: Threefoot Building (pages 1 & 24)  
by Kim Gianakos • Mayor John Robert Smith (page 2)  
and Meridian City Council (pages 4-5) by Gwynne Pierce  
• Carousel photo (page 6) by Terrell Clark,  
courtesy Dr. Ronnye Purvis  
• Photos on pages 22-23, courtesy Lauderdale County  
Tourism Commission • Photos throughout the year  
by City of Meridian staff





To the City Council and the People of Meridian:

MERIDIAN

Mississippi

The firm hired to develop an image that accurately reflects our community interviewed hundreds of local residents and spent months researching

our characteristics and inherent strengths. Their findings, reflected in the simple, crossed lines of latitude and longitude in the new logo, underscore what we've long known to be true—Meridian is the center, the hub, the core of a large area and hundreds of thousands of people. Our neighbors look to us to meet their medical, retail, industrial, cultural and recreational needs.

Our regional dominance contributes enormously to the vitality and strength of the local economy and provides a broad spectrum of services to the people of our area. Just drive through the parking lot of any hospital or shopping complex and see all the license plates from neighboring counties. Cruise on the interstate any morning and see people from surrounding areas headed to Meridian to work.

The opening of Phase 1 of Meridian Crossroads has greatly expanded shopping opportunities, and Phase 2 will provide even more retail space and dining opportunities. Add this large development to the hugely successful Bonita Lakes Mall and Bonita Lakes Crossing, plus the ever-expanding North Hills Street shopping district, and Meridian's place as a shopping mecca has been secured.

Attracting and supporting industry is another vital element in

*Behind Mayor Smith, through a window at the MSU Riley Center, is the Threefoot Building on the left, destined to become an upscale downtown hotel, and, in the center, First State Bank, the newest addition to downtown's growing economic base.*



our community's strength. During the year, Summer Industries, a manufacturer of industrial and consumer packaging products, opened at the Sonny Montgomery Industrial Park. Teikuro Corporation, the world's leading die maintenance and replating company, opened and already has plans to expand. Tower Automotive completed its 80,000-square-foot expansion and added 40 new employees, for a total employee count of 245.

Downtown, we are continuing to pursue projects that will bolster the economy and play to the unique and historic character of the heart of our community. The MSU Riley Center, now in its second season, last year attracted nearly 63,000 visitors for performances, workshops and conferences. We are in the developmental and early design stages of a plan to convert the Threefoot Building into a downtown hotel, and the restoration of our magnificent 1915 City Hall continues on schedule.

Two other developments speak to our commitment to outstanding quality of life and a belief in our community's future. The Hope VI project is creating safe, wholesome housing and neighborhoods for those who need public housing, with a mix of rental units and, for the first time, homeowner units. And the people of our community spoke resoundingly for the future of our school system when they voted overwhelmingly for the school bond issue.

All of these projects and programs are helping us to meet the needs of the people of Meridian and continue to grow as the economic center of our region.



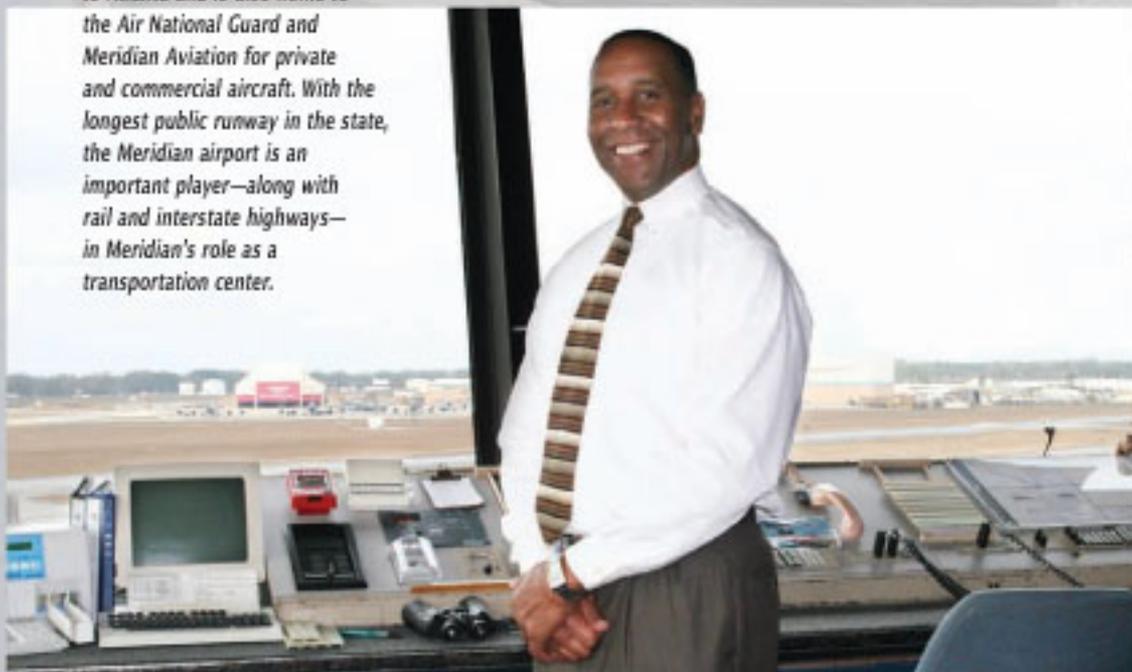
*The HOPE VI development provides attractive, safe housing to low-income residents through a mix of rental and homeowner units. The second phase of the project is still under construction.*

**City Council**



*Ward 4 Councilmember Jesse Palmer shows off the Jeff Anderson Regional Cancer Center, just one element in Meridian's vast medical complex. The medical community employs more people than any other industry in the community and accounts for Meridian's dominance as a regional medical center.*

*Ward 5 Councilmember John Harris has a bird's eye view of the Meridian Regional Airport from the control tower. The airport provides daily passenger service to Atlanta and is also home to the Air National Guard and Meridian Aviation for private and commercial aircraft. With the longest public runway in the state, the Meridian airport is an important player—along with rail and interstate highways—in Meridian's role as a transportation center.*



*Ward 2 Councilmember Mary Perry isn't sure if she wants to do much climbing, sliding and swinging at Planet Playground, but plenty of kids do. Planet Playground is part of the large Northeast Park that also includes softball fields and a tennis center. With other recreational and athletic centers dotted around town, Meridian meets the recreational needs of thousands of youths and adults.*

Ward 3 Councilmember Barbara Henson is ready to do some shopping at the Funky Monkey, one of the newest retail stores in the burgeoning North Hills Street area. With lots of shopping opportunities there and at Bonita Lakes Mall, Bonita Lakes Crossing, the just-opened Phase I of Meridian Crossroads, downtown and other shopping centers, Meridian serves as the retail hub for our entire trade area.



Ward 1 Councilmember George Thomas checks out the wide array of sound and musical equipment on display at the headquarters of Peavey Electronics. A world-renowned international corporation, Peavey is one of scores of industries providing good jobs to the people of the Meridian area.



*Mom gets her little girl firmly seated on a horse at the Dentzel Carousel during an event hosted by Dr. Ronnye Purvis. The tot is the latest in many generations of area residents who have thrilled to rides on the historic carousel.*



## Parks & Recreation

Whether area residents want to learn to play the dulcimer, kick around a soccer ball or strengthen muscles through yoga, the Parks and Recreation Department has it covered. Getting more people involved and expanding the opportunities available are reflected in the name change

of the former Senior Citizens Center. This thriving hub is now the Meridian Activity Center, an inclusive name that more accurately represents the fact adults of all ages take part in the programs there. The center added a seated exercise class, a bamboo-pole exercise class and an additional yoga class. Small groups got together and started walking as part of the state's "Let's Go Walking" campaign. Other new classes include duplicate bridge, storytelling, Japanese language and customs, colored pencil drawing techniques, beaded jewelry, mosaics, dulcimer playing and literary discussions. Some of these classes are held on Saturdays for the convenience of working people.

Sewing and quilting enthusiasts at the Velma Young Center staged their first ever exhibit of completed projects, including intricate quilts and throws, skirts, blouses, jackets and many other hand-crafted items. The center's summer program for children once again boasted maximum enrollment. The children enjoyed arts and crafts, weekly swimming, bowling, skating, and educational and fun field trips during the seven-week program.

Our athletic programs continue to draw participants from inside the city, outside the city and even neighboring counties, especially the major sports of baseball, softball, basketball and soccer. Other sports like tennis, volleyball and flag football are growing with the help of civic

organizations offering a variety of leagues. Northeast Park stayed busy as the host site for many girls' soccer tournaments, soccer matches and 5K runs, and the tennis center is experiencing growth at all levels of play.

Our Grounds Maintenance Division responded to a demanding schedule because of all the special events, festivals and tournaments throughout the year. Major work was done at Phil Hardin Park to expand field sizes and improve usage of the 28-year-old facility. The Jaycee Soccer Complex also got some attention to its irrigation system and turf that had been overused and worn out due to extensive play and extremely dry conditions for the past two summers. Plans are being developed to build a new concession/restroom building in the center of the complex.

Lakeview Golf Course has seen a slight decline in play, as most municipal golf courses in the south have over the past 18 months. However, the course is in good condition, with greens and fairways looking better than they have in years. Hundreds of trees were planted to repair the damage from Hurricane Katrina, and new golf carts were leased to replace the old, worn-out fleet.

The historic and treasured Highland Park Dentzel Carousel was awarded a grant from the Community Foundation of East Mississippi, supplemented with donations in memory of the late Mrs. Lucile Rosenbaum, who was a lifelong champion of the carousel and its preservation. The funds will be used to install a modified air conditioning system to help control temperatures in the summer. This project will make the carousel an even more attractive place for parties, receptions and other events.



Above, West Lauderdale students pose for a photo to capture their school field trip to the Dentzel Carousel. The carousel house is a popular spot for field trips, birthday parties and receptions.

At right, Teresa Twente, an instructor at the Meridian Activity Center, demonstrates how to repair tatting on a tablecloth. Tatting is the art of making lace, and is just one of a wide array of classes offered at the center.





*Above, a firefighter installs a waste-oil-fired heater in the engine bay at the Central Fire Station. The new heater burns discarded oil products and should reduce the cost of heating the large space. At right, firefighters high on a 95-foot platform truck battle a blaze at Village Apartments, one of two large apartment fires in 2007.*

Fire

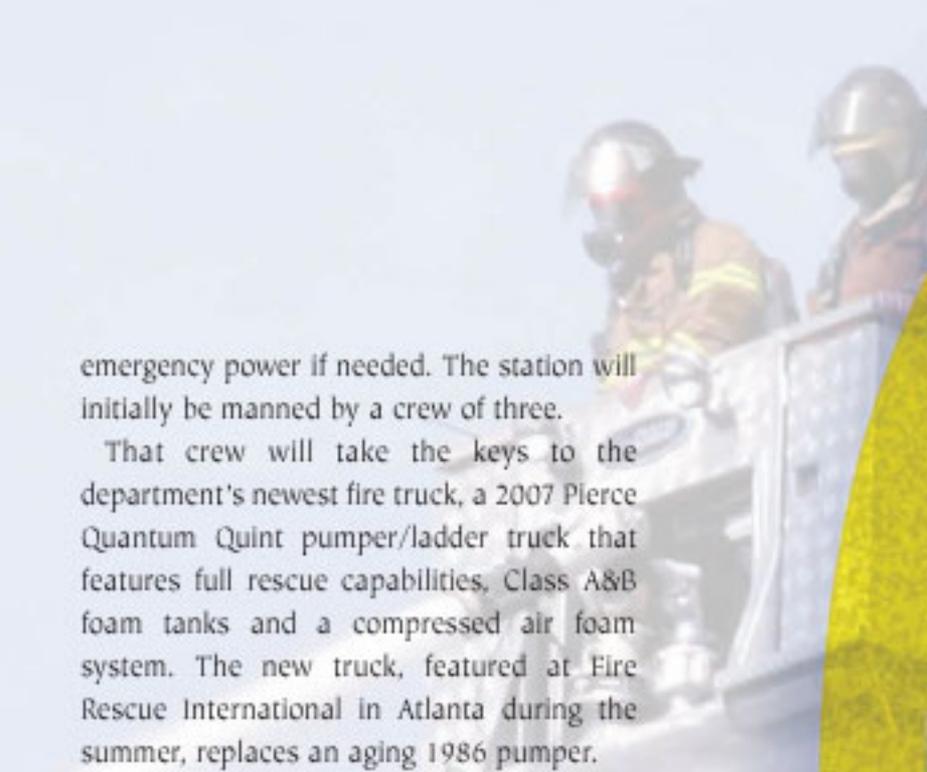
Every fire hydrant in the city has now been recorded into the city's GPS mapping system, greatly aiding in pre-fire planning by the department. This project was made possible through a Riley Foundation grant, which paid for the hardware, software and the salary of a Meridian

Community College student hired to locate and record every hydrant.

Another big project was the installation of a waste-oil-fired heater in the engine bay at the Central Fire Station. This cavernous space can now be heated more efficiently and economically since the heater burns discarded oil products, which are saved from the city garage and the Fire Department maintenance facility to be burned as fuel in the new unit.

The location of a new fire station—on Highway 19 South at Bonita Drive—was chosen specifically to serve that

growing area of our community. The site is also a strategic location for any calls to the Sonny Montgomery Industrial Park or the new Meridian/Lauderdale County Industrial Park. Design work is completed and the plans call for two drive-through bays, a living room kitchen and three bedrooms. The station was designed to be as energy efficient and maintenance free as possible, and will be equipped with a natural gas/LP gas-fueled emergency generator that can run all station operations during power outages. The station will also feature a self-contained breathing apparatus fill station that can also run on



emergency power if needed. The station will initially be manned by a crew of three.

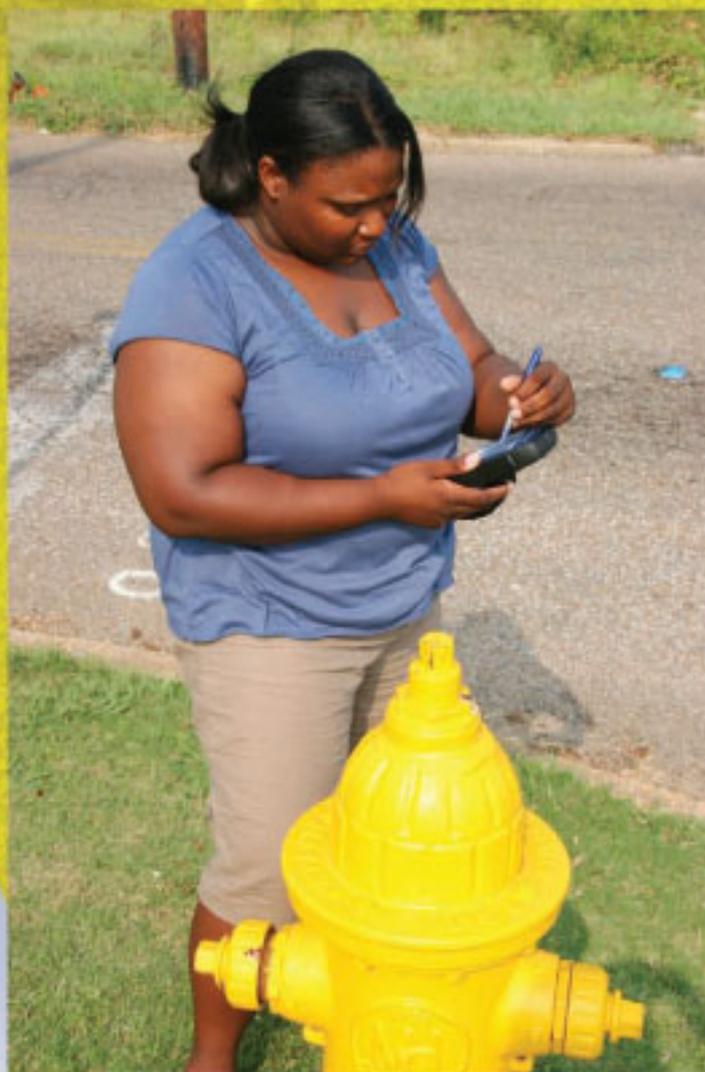
That crew will take the keys to the department's newest fire truck, a 2007 Pierce Quantum Quint pumper/ladder truck that features full rescue capabilities, Class A&B foam tanks and a compressed air foam system. The new truck, featured at Fire Rescue International in Atlanta during the summer, replaces an aging 1986 pumper.

Our firefighters continued to get extensive training at the Public Safety Training Center, including training in responding to structural collapses, one of the newest classes offered at the facility. Using their training to serve the community, firefighters responded to more than 3,200 calls during the year. The vast majority of those—nearly 2,000—were emergency medical or motor vehicle accident calls, 388 were fires and the balance were a variety of other types of calls for assistance. The department also conducted more than 3,600 inspections, ensuring the safety of structures in the city.

Established in 1882, the department celebrated its 125th anniversary by adopting a new patch design. In the four corners of the patch are symbols representing the four major disciplines of fire service: fire, hazardous materials, rescue and emergency medical response. At the bottom of the patch are the words, "Everyone Comes Home," a reminder that the safety of each firefighter is top priority.



Above, the department's new Pierce Quantum Quint truck was on display at the Fire Rescue International convention in Atlanta. The truck will be housed at the new station being built on Highway 19 South.



At left, Meridian Community College student Elyse Jeffries spent the summer locating and recording every fire hydrant into the city's GPS system. This project was made possible through a grant from The Riley Foundation.



Above, cashier Felicia Barfield waits on a customer at the Water Collections window at Temporary City Hall. At right, the ornate columns on the exterior of our 1915 City Hall reflect the beauty and character of the historic building undergoing restoration.



Finance & Records

With City Hall employees moved to temporary quarters, the Finance and Records staff started the long and painstaking job of overseeing the restoration of our 1915 City Hall. Selective demolition involved the removal of inappropriate walls, floor coverings, ceilings and other changes

made over the decades, while carefully preserving as many of the original finishes as possible. Extensive study and planning for restoration had to be done, all under the watchful eye of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

Bids were taken for the exterior work, which includes cleaning and restoration of all exterior surfaces; installation of historically appropriate windows and doors; repointing or replacing all masonry and terra cotta; removal of concrete floors for a new elevator, plumbing and fire stairs; structural steel framing and reinforced foundations for new stairs and mechanical mezzanines; and site work, including removal of parking lots, the old fountain and sidewalks.

Another big project for the staff was to hold a special election for the Meridian Separate School District in which

voters were asked to authorize the issuance of up to \$19.5 million for capital improvements. While all elections pose challenges, this one was especially difficult because it was the first using the state's new voting machines and changes implemented by the secretary of state. In addition, it was the first election utilizing statewide voter rolls. Problems arose when all the required data was not available in the format needed. After many phone conversations and meetings involving officials in three states, the election was successfully held.

The Information Systems Division provided computer expertise to assist with the school bond election. The staff also coordinated the installation of the computer network for the Community Development Department, which moved into new offices on the ground floor of the Arts District Parking Garage. The department's quarters are

entirely modular, so all computer and communications systems were integrated into the modular panels that delineate work spaces. Our staff also implemented a new format for printing water bills, which allows for four bills per page to be printed, resulting in faster and more efficient processing. Staff implemented a new server and link to speed up access to the county's jail and land roll records, performed many server replacements and software upgrades, and implemented a new software package for the courts and records function.

Courts and Records, which operates through the Business Affairs Division, needs the best programs available for its huge work load. During the year, staff processed almost 18,000 cases through municipal court, and they furnished misdemeanor records and accident reports on request.

The Business Affairs office is also responsible for all the city's purchases, as well as establishing and administering purchasing policies, analyzing performance, the warehousing and disposal of surplus property and consolidating the purchase of like items. During the year, more than 9,000 purchase orders were processed and 50 competitive bid processes were completed. Division staff also issues and maintains privilege licenses. During the year, nearly 2,000 business licenses were issued. The staff also regulates the taxi industry, providing assistance to the Taxicab Advisory Board that oversees local taxi operations. The division received the city's property taxes collected by the county, entered them into the finance system and performed a reconciliation at the end of the fiscal year.

While addressing a broad range of issues, Finance and Records must balance those demands with its mission of maintaining the city's financial stability, accountability and capacity for growth. Once again, and for the 11th consecutive year, the department's sound fiscal policies earned it the prestigious Certificate of Excellence for the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report.

*City Clerk Ed Skipper checks over the results of the special school bond issue election held at the request of the Meridian Separate School District. Ed and his staff are responsible for conducting all city and school district elections.*



*Columns in the second floor lobby of City Hall have been wrapped to protect them during the selective demolition and restoration processes. The inset shows the damage done to the ornate crown molding and pilasters during "modernization" attempts over the years. Every historic detail that was destroyed will be recreated by master craftsmen.*

TEMPORARY  
CITY HALL



*Above, first responders training at the Public Safety Training Center check an overturned car for "victims." In this scenario, a building has collapsed onto a parking lot. At right, trainees stand on a pile of rubble and survey the devastation around them. To create the collapsed structure, city crews hauled tons of concrete slabs and pieces from the Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina, then arranged them to simulate a collapsed building.*



Homeland Security

Suppose a child wanders off in his neighborhood, or a chemical spill threatens about half the city? With our new CodeRED alert system, city officials can send recorded messages to selected areas or the entire community. These messages will contain vital information, like a description

of the child or an area that needs to be evacuated. With more than 14,000 phone numbers already plugged into the system, our residents will get immediate information and instructions for any conceivable type of emergency.

In its emergency management role, the Homeland Security Department also responded to hazardous materials spills, installed new equipment in the Emergency Operations Center, secured a grant to install security cameras at Union Station, and used another grant to purchase radios, a light tower and tactical gear for the Police Department. Staff also completed the paperwork on three Hurricane Katrina projects, netting a reimbursement of more than \$600,000, for a total of more than \$3.1 million.

In one of those lemonade-from-lemons scenarios, our

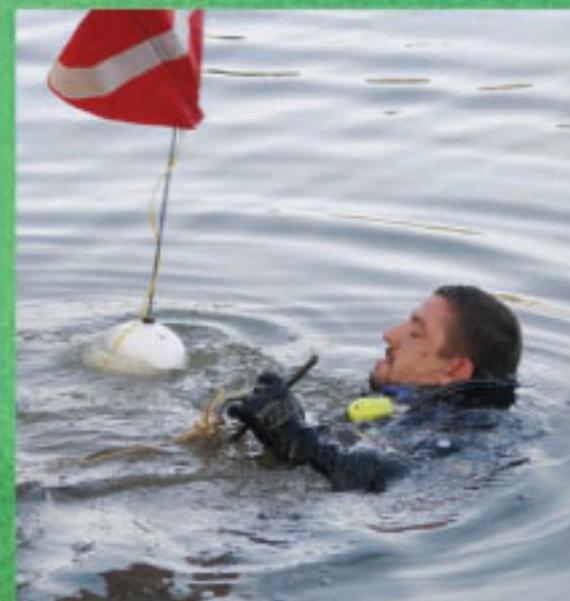
staff hauled more than \$1 million worth of concrete slabs from the Katrina-ravaged Gulf Coast to the Public Safety Training Center and used it to build a "collapsed" structure that realistically mimics the challenges first responders would face in the aftermath of a hurricane, tornado or other disaster. Also at the center, a grant from the National Rifle Association allowed staff to repair damages done to the ranges during the hurricane. The Meridian Shooting Club entered into an agreement with the center to allow citizens to shoot on the ranges during designated times. In exchange, the shooting club built a clay target range, installed several covered pavilions and co-hosted several benefits, including the Jackie Abercrombie Memorial Shoot, with proceeds benefitting the Meridian Police Department Explorer Program.

So much training is being hosted at the center that the staff, through a donation from The Riley Foundation, purchased four mobile homes from the state. They will be developed into on-site housing for visiting instructors and students. Making sure our own workers are prepared for emergencies, the center trained about 200 city employees in the Incident Command System that is the heart of emergency response. We hosted a three-weekend passenger rail rescue course for area volunteer firefighters; held four teen defensive driving courses; hosted a 12-day Homeland Security diver school; and offered a hunter education course with the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. These training sessions and others added up to 89 different classes held during the year. In addition, 165 days' worth of training was held on the ranges, with 17 agencies represented.

One of Homeland Security's other responsibilities is to serve as team leader for our area's Regional Response Team, which is completely funded through grants from the Mississippi Office of Homeland Security. These grant funds were used to host a 12-day Collapse Structure Technician class, with a total cost of \$60,000; create a Homeland Security dive team after purchasing \$75,000 worth of dive equipment; and buy \$100,000 worth of air quality monitoring equipment that can be used whenever air quality might be compromised.

A big, two-day functional exercise tested emergency response capabilities of both city employees and Regional Response Team members. The first day, the city's first responders plus other employees needed for support services were tested in a simulated emergency event. The second day, 70 team members from more than 20 agencies in the region were mobilized to assist in the mock disaster. When the team is deployed in a real emergency, members will be housed in four travel trailers purchased by the department, again with state grant funds.

*At right, a diver in training at Bonita Lakes places an anchor flag to mark the spot where he found an object on the lake bed.*



*Below, Public Works and Fire Department staff members learn how to use shoring equipment designed to shore up earthen banks in the event of a trench collapse.*



*At the rail disaster simulator site at the Public Safety Training Center, a trainee carries a "passenger" away from a derailed passenger rail car.*





Police Corporal Artis Johnson takes aim during firearms training at the Public Safety Training Center.

Below, the new shoot house at the training facility is divided into rooms in which various realistic scenarios can be carried out. For example, SWAT team officers learn how to properly conduct an entry into a building under hostile conditions, and patrol officers get training in how to carry out building searches.



Police

Keeping our community and surrounding area free from drugs is the continuing mission of the Interstate Crime Enforcement unit (ICE). This highly skilled unit made numerous seizures of illicit drugs and money, striking a blow to drug dealers who use our interstate highways to transport drugs and illegal profits.

Not only does this unit fight drug trafficking, it has also helped provide the department with seized drug funds that are then utilized to purchase equipment that enhances our officers' performance. During the year, the department outfitted officers with new, 40-caliber Glock semi-automatic handguns and new leather accessories. Confiscated drug money was also used to buy tasers—which generate electrical surges to temporarily incapacitate an unruly suspect—and to purchase five new Chevrolet Impalas, replacing an aging fleet in the Criminal Investigations Division (CID).

At the Public Safety Training Center, seized drug money

enabled the department to build a self-contained shoot house, allowing officers to train by firing live rounds inside different rooms in the building. These sessions are videotaped and the tapes are then used to critique each officer's performance and train other officers. The Training Division continued to grow, providing professional training not only for our own officers but also for other law enforcement agencies in the region. Numerous state and national competitions and training sessions were held, including the North American Sniper Competition and the nationally renowned Hathcock Sniper School.

The department's Underwater Rescue and Recovery Unit added several officers, all of them trained and certified as

*At right, Senior Police Officer John Griffith, left, and Detective Eric James are two of the officers on the four-man dive team. They are honing their skills in underwater recovery at Bonita Lakes.*



divers during the year. These officers respond to water rescue calls and search under water for victims and evidence. Another expansion was in the motorcycle unit, which grew from four to six officers. These talented officers continued their winning streak by taking the top three places in statewide competitions. Updated 2008 Harley Davidson Road King motorcycles were ordered during the year.

Through doggedness and determination, the Cold Case Unit within the CID investigated old cases once thought nearly impossible to solve and prosecute. Several of these cases were solved, presented to the district attorney and successfully prosecuted, bringing criminals to justice and bringing peace to victims and their families. The department continues to apply for and receive grants that enhance the effectiveness of public programs, such as DUI enforcement, domestic violence programs and Neighborhood Watch.

Our police officers are eagerly anticipating the construction of a new and modern police headquarters. During the year, architectural firms made presentations, competing to provide professional services. A firm was chosen to design the building, and the department moved one step closer to the realization of a new police facility.



*At left, with a grim look of anticipation, Officer John Griffith steels himself to be hit with a taser from the instructor of the taser education class all officers attend. Holding John's arms are Police Officer Tommy Coker, left, and Captain Ricky McCary. Only officers who volunteer are subjected to the taser strike.*



Frank Sharp, plant technician, handles the repair of a mixer at the North Meridian Freshwater Treatment Plant.

Using a trackhoe, Public Works crews smooth dirt in an area adjacent to the lower lake at Bonita Lakes. The project provided better access to the water.



Public Works

Public Works crews had a major impact on the ambitious Hope VI public housing development. Street Division crews spent considerable time installing curbs, gutters and sidewalks at the J.T. Davis Court Apartments, while Engineering Division staff provided expertise at both Davis

Court and the other Hope VI site at Victory Village. Engineering staff also reviewed and approved several subdivision plans and inspected the installation of infrastructure, such as the water and sewer lines on Sweetgum Bottom Road.

Other special products for the Street Division included a walking track at Phil Hardin Park and a road built to the communications tower at the Public Safety Training Center. These were among nearly 1,000 work orders completed during the year, including:

- Asphalt work like repairing potholes, making cuts to repair utilities and repairing eroding street shoulders.
- Drainage work such as clearing culverts, inlets, storm drains and ditches; repairing washouts and cave-ins; and installation or repair of inlets.
- Removal or pruning of trees, and stump grinding.
- Installation or repair of curbs and sidewalks.
- Routine grass cutting in ditches and sides of roadways, plus clean-up at specific sites needing attention.
- Installation of or repairs to traffic signals.

- Creating, preparing and installing street signs and markers, plus striping of city streets.
- Running regular routes for street sweeping and for mosquito spraying.

With several concerts, the State Games of Mississippi and other events like all-terrain vehicle competitions, the Freshwater Treatment Division estimates more than 250,000 people visited Bonita Lakes during the year. To help supply adequate electricity for all those events, new electrical outlets were installed. Another new feature will be exercise and playground equipment to be installed in the coming year. Purchase of this equipment was made possible through a grant from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Mississippi.

The primary mission of the freshwater staff is ensuring that Meridian residents enjoy the finest water possible when they turn on their taps. The Mississippi State Department of Health gave us a perfect score in its annual capacity assessment, the sixth time in seven years we've gotten the top score. No other city our size in the state has

matched this achievement. Bulk water storage capacity has now reached 12 million gallons with the installation of a new 500,000-gallon elevated tank.

The Wastewater Treatment Plant Division treated 2.9 billion gallons of wastewater at the main plant and 93 million gallons at the East Meridian facility that serves NAS Meridian, a normal process made more challenging by equipment failures that resulted in the purchase and installation of new equipment. A new transformer and underground cables were installed, with additional work planned for the coming year. A new digester blower and a trash rake arm are being installed, and concrete repairs were made to reduce leakage.

Maintaining a vast array of vehicles and equipment got a little easier for the staff at the Fleet Maintenance Division. Implementation of a system called ALLDATA gives our mechanics access to the same information used by car dealerships, making vehicle maintenance and repair more efficient. In addition to more than 350 motor vehicles, the staff also maintains more than 600 two-way radios, plus heavy machinery, ATVs and motorcycles, trailers and small-engine equipment.

Reading water meters can be a dangerous business, so our Utility Billing Division is in the process of retrofitting problem meters with transmitters that allow the meters to be read from as far away as 1,800 feet. These transmitters are being installed on meters behind locked gates, in deep pits, routinely covered by parked cars or at homes with dangerous dogs. The staff is also continuing to replace old meters with the more accurate, touch-read meters. Nearly 4,000 of the new meters have been installed, leaving just over 12,000 still needing replacement.

The division billed in excess of \$12.3 million in water, sewer and garbage services, with an impressive collection rate of 99.55 percent. Our seventh annual Consumer Confidence Report on water quality again showed that the city's drinking water meets or exceeds all federal and state requirements. The report, mandated by the EPA, can be read on the city's web site at [www.meridianms.org](http://www.meridianms.org).

While regular garbage, compostable waste and bulky waste like furniture and appliances are routinely collected under our contract with Waste Management, some items are not permitted to be put into the regular waste stream. To address this issue, our Contract Compliance Division once again hosted two very popular Household Hazardous Waste Days. On those days,



*Thousands of music lovers jammed Bonita Lakes for the first ever "Rock at the Lake" concert over the Labor Day weekend. The stage was set up at the boat launch area, with the lake as a scenic backdrop.*



*At the Freshwater Treatment Plant, workers are replacing a surface pump. These pumps supply the water to homes and businesses served by Meridian's water system.*



*As the number of events at Bonita Lakes continues to grow, providing ample power had become a challenge. So crews worked to install four additional power sources to provide plenty of juice for concerts, festivals and other special events.*

Continues on page 24...



*Above, huge crowds pack downtown streets for the annual Juneteenth festival. Juneteenth is a commemoration of the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation by President Abraham Lincoln. At right and in background, sandwiched between Dumont Plaza and the MSU Riley Center, booths along Fifth Street display works of art for shoppers and browsers during the Threefoot Arts Festival.*

Significant commercial development, like our region's newest shopping facility, Meridian Crossroads, has produced astounding growth in the construction value of permits issued by the Inspection Division. In the last two years, those values have more than doubled,

leaping from \$32 million to \$66 million.

The Planning Division was awarded two grants from the Mississippi Forestry Commission, one for nearly \$20,000 for tree planting at Bonita Lakes, and the other for nearly \$50,000 to replace Katrina-damaged trees at Lakeview Golf Course. The Bonita project included the installation of native trees at the entrance to the park to screen Highway 19 South and the surrounding urban area from the park. Tree planting continued in residential areas and downtown, specifically around the MSU Riley Center. Through our urban forestry program, the city was designated as a Tree City USA for the 17th consecutive year by the National Arbor Day Foundation.

Cast bronze plaques identifying historic downtown buildings were installed through a grant from the

Mississippi Department of Archives and History. These plaques identify each building by name, address and date of construction, and contain other information of historic interest. Another grant, this one through the Certified Local Government program, will allow us to develop a Geographic Information System (GIS) layer containing information on each building in the downtown historic district in order to improve management and marketing of these resources.

Planning staff worked with the developers of Meridian Crossroads and the new Wal-Mart Supercenter on Highway 19 North, and they coordinated approval of plans for the Hope VI housing development. Under our affordable housing initiative, surplus property was offered to developers for low- to middle-income housing.

Additionally, 34 tax-forfeited properties were acquired from the state. The Planning staff was successful in supporting state legislation that gives the city more flexibility to provide property to developers for affordable housing.

Union Station welcomed a new addition during the year. The Depot Café opened for business in September. The café is doing a brisk business, as more than 300,000 people moved through Union Station either on Amtrak or by Greyhound bus. Union Station's conference rooms hosted more than 250 business meetings, training sessions, banquets, parties and receptions.

Labor Day's Rock at the Lake was a new event on the Cultural Affairs Division calendar. Co-sponsored by Peavey Electronics and The Radio People, the Bonita Lakes concert drew more than 5,000 people to rock with Molly Hatchet, Bo Bice and Black Stone Cherry. Cultural Affairs also worked with the Meridian Arts Council on the 36th Annual Arts in the Park at Bonita. The festival featured 45 artists and crafters, plus a Jimmie Rodgers Gospel Talent competition, and lots of hands-on activities for the kids. The annual Fourth of July Pops Concert became the concert that wasn't. The skies opened up, torrents of rain drenched the crowds, and the Meridian Symphony Orchestra concert and the flyover by jets from NAS Meridian had to be cancelled. However, the storm passed at just about dark, so the giant fireworks display went on as planned, providing the perfect patriotic ending to what had been a soggy experience.

In addition to its annual work on the Threefoot Arts Festival, the downtown tree lighting at Dumont Plaza and the Downtown Merchants Christmas Parade, Cultural Affairs coordinated a process that led to the creation of the Alliance for Downtown Meridian, a new downtown development and revitalization board. This newly structured agency, developed with the Seaside Institute and the Tomlinson Group, will design and implement a targeted strategy for the continued revitalization of downtown.

Meanwhile, the Main Street program developed a new promotional

Continues on page 24...



The annual Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony was moved from City Hall to Dumont Plaza because of restoration work under way at historic City Hall. The 24-foot-high tree is festooned with burgundy and gold clusters and thousands of lights, and topped with a four-foot-tall star.

Mayor Smith, right, and other local officials applauded the unveiling of the Blues Trail marker commemorating the life of Meridian's own Jimmie Rodgers, the Father of Country Music. Rodgers received a plaque because of the significant impact his music had on the evolution of the blues in Mississippi. Blues Trail markers around the state herald Mississippi artists' lasting contributions to the blues genre.



Trees and pine seedlings are planted at Lakeview Golf Course, which lost more than 100 mature trees in the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

## 2007 Funds From All Sources

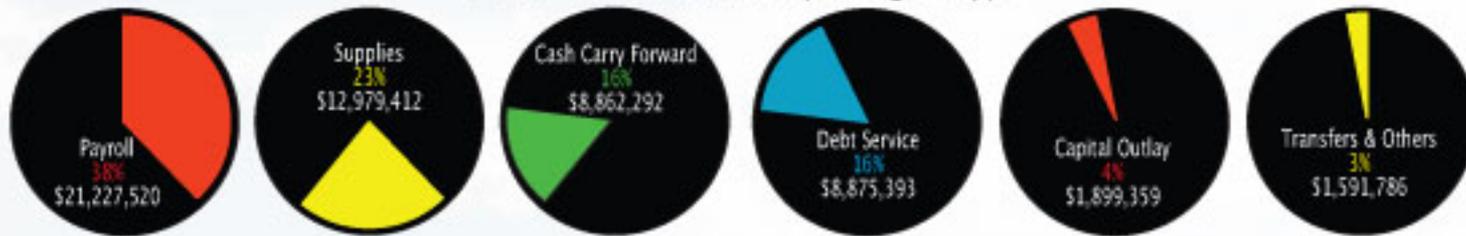


## Millage Comparisons

| GOVERNMENT SERVICES  | 1999   | 2000   | 2001   | 2002   | 2003   | 2004   | 2005   | 2006   | 2007   | 2008   |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| General Fund (Including Parks & Recreation)                    | 21.48  | 23.44  | 25.86  | 28.69  | 30.39  | 30.39  | 30.19  | 29.56  | 30.51  | 33.23  |
| Fire/Police  | 7.35   | 7.45   | 5.28   | 4.79   | 4.60   | 4.49   | 4.79   | 5.05   | 5.40   | 5.66   |
| General Municipal Retirement                                   | 3.00   | 3.00   | 3.00   | 3.00   | 3.00   | 3.00   | 3.00   | 3.00   | 3.00   | 3.00   |
| Total (Excluding Bond & Interest)                              | 31.83  | 33.89  | 34.14  | 36.48  | 37.99  | 37.88  | 37.98  | 37.61  | 38.91  | 41.89  |
| Bond & Interest  | 17.31  | 15.25  | 15.00  | 15.01  | 12.09  | 12.20  | 12.10  | 12.47  | 11.17  | 11.19  |
| Total<br>(City, Government & Service Receiving Ad Valorem Tax) | 49.14  | 49.14  | 49.14  | 51.49  | 50.08  | 50.08  | 50.08  | 50.08  | 50.08  | 53.08  |
| CITY SCHOOLS   | 1999   | 2000   | 2001   | 2002   | 2003   | 2004   | 2005   | 2006   | 2007   | 2008   |
| Separate School District (MP & DM)                             | 50.66  | 54.24  | 52.91  | 52.68  | 52.50  | 54.38  | 54.38  | 53.30  | 54.00  | 54.40  |
| Meridian Community College (Support & Enlarge)                 | 5.83   | 6.16   | 6.57   | 7.00   | 7.00   | 7.00   | 7.00   | 7.00   | 7.00   | 7.00   |
| Bond & Interest  | 2.21   | 2.95   | 3.77   | 4.70   | 2.87   | 0.92   | 2.99   | 3.35   | 1.87   | 6.68   |
| Total<br>(For Schools Receiving Ad Valorem Tax)                | 58.70  | 63.35  | 63.25  | 64.38  | 62.37  | 62.30  | 64.37  | 63.65  | 62.87  | 68.08  |
| Total<br>(All Operations Receiving Ad Valorem Tax)             | 107.84 | 112.49 | 112.39 | 115.87 | 112.45 | 112.38 | 114.45 | 113.73 | 112.95 | 121.16 |
| County   | 42.26  | 42.26  | 43.11  | 43.11  | 43.06  | 42.50  | 44.79  | 45.45  | 47.67  | 48.44  |
| GRAND TOTAL  | 150.10 | 154.75 | 155.50 | 158.98 | 155.51 | 154.88 | 159.24 | 159.18 | 160.62 | 169.60 |

In the background on these two pages, Summer Industries, left, and Teikuro Corporation.

## 2007 Use of Funds by Budget Type



## Municipal Budget 2008—Year Ending September 30, 2008

| REVENUES   |                            | EXPENDITURES                      |                            |
|--|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Licenses & Permits                               | \$ 2,760,000               | General Government                | \$ 3,722,344               |
| Inter-Governmental                               | 14,443,000                 | Finance & Records                 | 3,483,594                  |
| Charges for Services                             | 2,345,500                  | Community Development             | 1,716,093                  |
| Fines & Forfeits                                 | 860,000                    | Parks & Recreation                | 2,539,729                  |
| Miscellaneous                                    | 610,000                    | Public Works                      | 7,309,532                  |
| Balance End of Prior Year                        | 3,680,000                  | Police Department                 | 7,308,505                  |
|  |                            | Fire Department                   | 6,329,703                  |
| Tax Levy Required<br>to Support General Fund     | 8,461,000                  | Cash Reserve for FY 07 Operations | 750,000                    |
| <b>TOTAL GENERAL FUND</b>                        |                            | <b>TOTAL GENERAL FUND</b>         |                            |
| <b>AVAILABLE CASH &amp; ANTICIPATED REVENUES</b> | <b>\$33,159,500</b>        | <b>EXPENDITURES</b>               | <b>\$33,159,500</b>        |
| Water Fund                                       | 12,604,000                 | Water Fund                        | 12,604,000                 |
| Lakeview Golf Course                             | 436,950                    | Lakeview Golf Course              | 436,950                    |
| Concessions                                      | 52,200                     | Concessions                       | 52,200                     |
| Union Station                                    | 420,350                    | Union Station                     | 420,350                    |
| Waste Collection & Disposal                      | 2,542,100                  | Waste Collection & Disposal       | 2,542,100                  |
| Homeland Security                                | 618,830                    | Homeland Security                 | 618,830                    |
| Arts District Parking Garage                     | 229,060                    | Arts District Parking Garage      | 229,060                    |
| <b>TOTAL ENTERPRISE FUNDS</b>                    | <b>16,903,490</b>          | <b>TOTAL ENTERPRISE FUNDS</b>     | <b>16,903,490</b>          |
| <b>DEBT SERVICE</b>                              | <b>4,900,000</b>           | <b>DEBT SERVICE</b>               | <b>4,900,000</b>           |
| <b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>                            |                            | <b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>         |                            |
| <b>FOR ALL CITY FUNDS</b>                        | <b><u>\$54,962,990</u></b> | <b>FROM ALL CITY FUNDS</b>        | <b><u>\$54,962,990</u></b> |



TECHNIQUES

# Development Projects

## ● Completed Projects

- Hope VI Street Infrastructure & Improvements (Davis Court)
- Sewer to Annexed Area
- Downtown Drainage Improvements
- Public Safety Training Center (Bonita)/Collapsed Structure Training Site
- Lakeview Golf Course Landscaping
- 52nd Street Drainage Improvements
- Historic resources plaques on public buildings downtown (not on map)

## ● Projects Under Construction

- Public Safety Training Center (Bonita)/On-Site Housing
- City Hall Renovations
- Fire Station: Highway 19 South
- Hope VI Street Infrastructure & Improvements (Victory Village)

## ● Designed Projects

- Highway 39/North Hills Street Intersection & North Hills Street Widening
- Bridge Improvements
  - 34th Street at Gallagher Creek
  - 35th Avenue at Gallagher Creek
  - 40th Street at Gallagher Creek
  - 29th Avenue at Sowashee Creek
  - Russell Drive at Sowashee Creek
- MDOT Interchange to New Industrial Park
- Mississippi Arts & Entertainment Center (Bonita)
- 10th Avenue Extension from Windmill Drive South & East to Highway 39
- B Street Water Treatment Plant/New Sludge Handling Facility

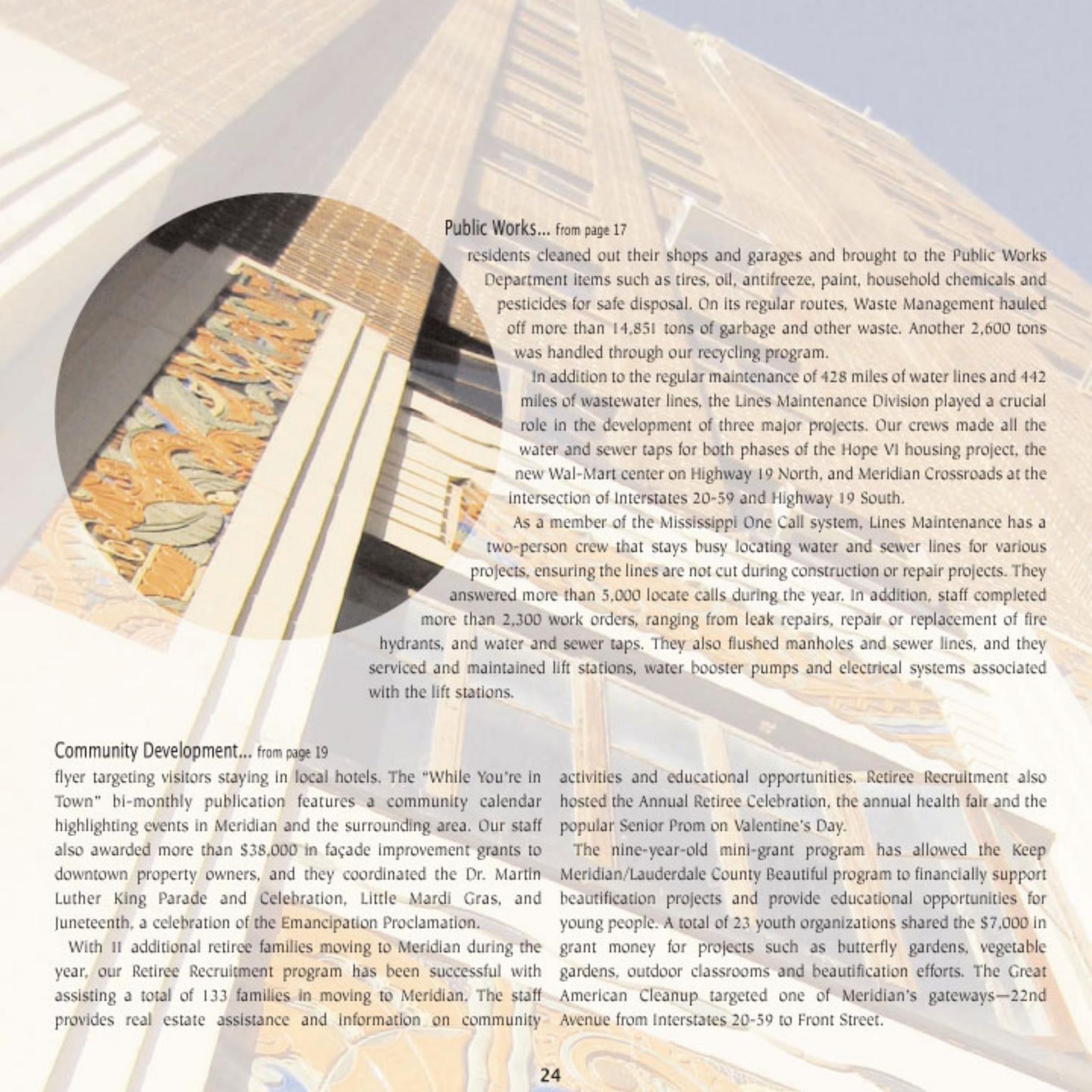
## ● Designed Projects (continued)

- North Meridian Water Plant/Hardware & Software for New Operating System
- South Waste Treatment Plant/Improvements to Initial Treatment Process
- Sewer Rehabilitation Analysis (not on map)

## ● Proposed Projects

- Threefoot Hotel
- African-American Business District: 5th Street
- Museum Complexes:
  - Children's Hands-On Museum (Old Bell South Building)
  - Railroad Museum (REA Building/Open)
  - Jimmie Rodgers Museum (Old Newell Paper Building)
  - Institute of Southern Jewish Life (Kress Building)
  - Mississippi Industrial Heritage Museum (Soulé Building/Open)
- Freedom Park (Downtown)
- 22nd Avenue Bridge Renovation
- Dumont Plaza Remodeling
- Building Murals & Public Art (Downtown)
- New Police Facility (Across from City Hall)
- Additional Repair of Lower Lake Dam at Bonita
- Medical District Area Improvements Plan (not on map)
- Retirement Development (not on map)
- One-Way to Two-Way Street Conversion (not on map)
- Highway 45 Interchange Improvements (not on map)
- Historic resources plaques on private buildings downtown (not on map)





### Public Works... from page 17

residents cleaned out their shops and garages and brought to the Public Works Department items such as tires, oil, antifreeze, paint, household chemicals and pesticides for safe disposal. On its regular routes, Waste Management hauled off more than 14,851 tons of garbage and other waste. Another 2,600 tons was handled through our recycling program.

In addition to the regular maintenance of 428 miles of water lines and 442 miles of wastewater lines, the Lines Maintenance Division played a crucial role in the development of three major projects. Our crews made all the water and sewer taps for both phases of the Hope VI housing project, the new Wal-Mart center on Highway 19 North, and Meridian Crossroads at the intersection of Interstates 20-59 and Highway 19 South.

As a member of the Mississippi One Call system, Lines Maintenance has a two-person crew that stays busy locating water and sewer lines for various projects, ensuring the lines are not cut during construction or repair projects. They answered more than 5,000 locate calls during the year. In addition, staff completed more than 2,300 work orders, ranging from leak repairs, repair or replacement of fire hydrants, and water and sewer taps. They also flushed manholes and sewer lines, and they serviced and maintained lift stations, water booster pumps and electrical systems associated with the lift stations.

### Community Development... from page 19

flyer targeting visitors staying in local hotels. The "While You're in Town" bi-monthly publication features a community calendar highlighting events in Meridian and the surrounding area. Our staff also awarded more than \$38,000 in façade improvement grants to downtown property owners, and they coordinated the Dr. Martin Luther King Parade and Celebration, Little Mardi Gras, and Juneteenth, a celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation.

With 11 additional retiree families moving to Meridian during the year, our Retiree Recruitment program has been successful with assisting a total of 133 families in moving to Meridian. The staff provides real estate assistance and information on community

activities and educational opportunities. Retiree Recruitment also hosted the Annual Retiree Celebration, the annual health fair and the popular Senior Prom on Valentine's Day.

The nine-year-old mini-grant program has allowed the Keep Meridian/Lauderdale County Beautiful program to financially support beautification projects and provide educational opportunities for young people. A total of 23 youth organizations shared the \$7,000 in grant money for projects such as butterfly gardens, vegetable gardens, outdoor classrooms and beautification efforts. The Great American Cleanup targeted one of Meridian's gateways—22nd Avenue from Interstates 20-59 to Front Street.

**Temporary City Hall Offices • 2412 7th Street**

Mayor

601.485.1927 • 601.485.1911 fax

[www.meridianms.org](http://www.meridianms.org)

**Executive Staff**

• Chief Administrative Officer

601.485.1929

• Equal Opportunity Officer

601.485.1962

• Human Resources Director

601.485.1934 • 601.485.2585 fax

• Assistant for Governmental Affairs

601.485.1819

• Risk Manager

601.485.1887

**City Council**

Clerk of Council

601.485.1959 • 601.485.1913 fax

**Finance & Records**

601.485.1946 • 601.485.1979 fax

Divisions: Administration, Business Affairs, Collection,  
Finance, Information Systems & Utility Collection

**Community Development**

723 23rd Avenue

601.485.1910 • 601.484.6813 fax

Retiree Recruitment: 800.585.3722

Divisions: Administration, Cultural Affairs, Inspection,  
Keep Meridian/Lauderdale County Beautiful, Main Street,  
Planning & Union Station

**Union Station**

1901 Front Street

601.484.6841 • 601.484.6849 fax

**City Attorney**

505 Constitution Avenue

601.693.2393

**Homeland Security**

1180 Sandflat Road

601.484.6890 • 601.484.6895 fax

**Fire**

2500 14th Street

601.485.1822 • 601.485.1878 fax • Emergency: 911

Divisions: Administration, Prevention, Suppression & Investigation

**Police**

2415 6th Street

601.485.1893 • 601.484.6832 fax

Divisions: Administration, Animal Control, D.A.R.E.,  
Investigation, Patrol & Training

**Parks & Recreation**

1720 Jimmie Rodgers Drive

Highland Park

601.485.1802 • 601.485.1851 fax

Divisions: Administration, Concessions & Lakeview Golf Course,  
Grounds Maintenance & Programs

**Public Works**

311 27th Avenue

601.485.1920 • 601.485.1864 fax

Divisions: Administration, Engineering, Freshwater Treatment,  
Fleet Maintenance, Sewer Collection, Solid Waste Contract  
Coordinator, Street Maintenance, Utility Billing, Wastewater  
Treatment, Water Distribution Lines & Traffic Control Devices

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