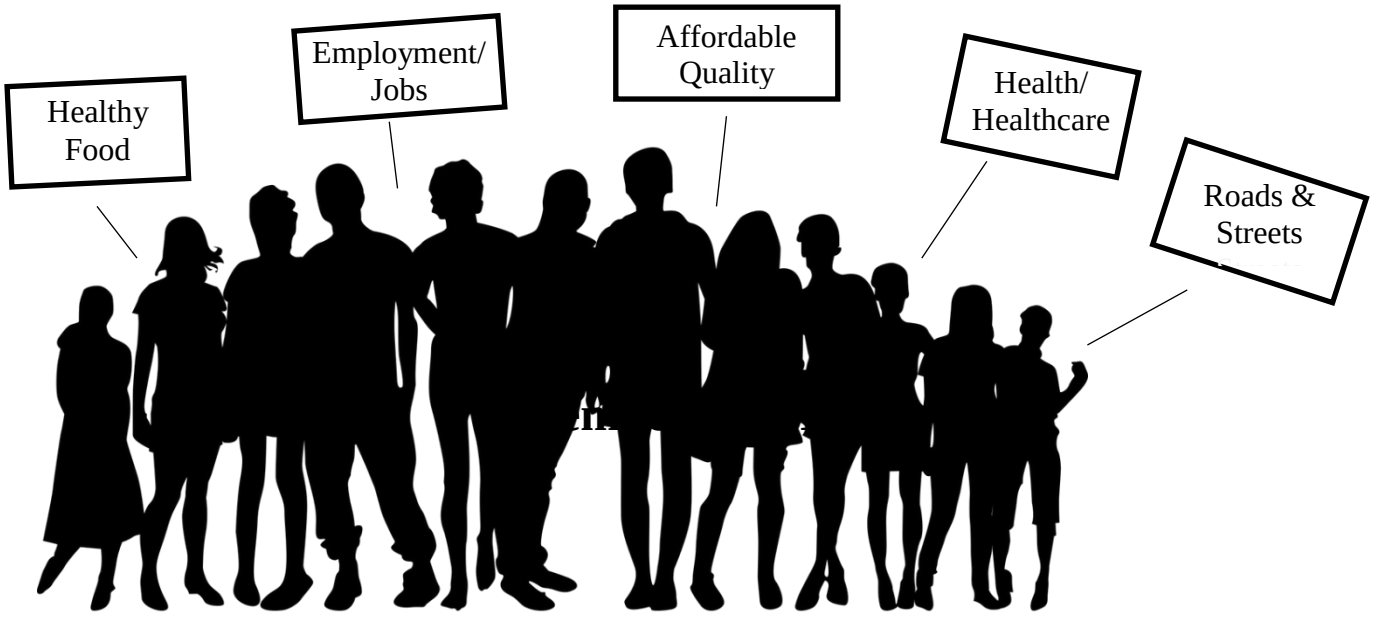
East Biloxi Community Collaborative
Community Needs Assessment

Summative Report



Submitted By
Jackson State University
Mississippi Urban Research Center in Collaboration with
Department of Urban and Regional Planning

November 08, 2019

Summative Report
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Acknowledgements

The authors of this Summative Report would like to acknowledge and give thanks to the East Biloxi Community Collaborative and its staff, residents of the East Biloxi community, service providers, community stakeholders, and other supporters who willingly gave their time and shared their perspectives throughout the process. This report would not have been possible without the cooperation, input and voices of the East Biloxi community. Research findings generated from this community needs assessment provide valuable insight regarding needs, priorities, and potential solutions that can help improve the quality of life in East Biloxi.

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Project Overview

The East Biloxi Community Collaborative (EBCC) was created in 2012 as an organization that offers residents and community-based groups a platform to develop and implement change strategies designed to improve the lives of children and families in East Biloxi. The mission of the EBCC is to create a healthy, vibrant and sustainable East Biloxi with improved outcomes for all children and families by working together to develop a better place to live, work and play (Perryman, 2019).

On February 28, 2019, the East Biloxi Community Collaborative (EBCC) issued a "Request for Qualifications" seeking a contractor to conduct a Community Needs Assessment in the East Biloxi community (Perryman, 2019). The contractor would be responsible for the coordination of a fully completed Community Needs Assessment that included the collection and analysis of data from multiple sources including conducting community forums, focus group meetings, and surveying area residents. The Mississippi Urban Research Center at Jackson State University was selected in March, 2019, to conduct the Community Needs Assessment (CNA) of the East Biloxi community.

This Summative Report presents findings from data collection activities conducted in support of the EBCC Community Needs Assessment. The project's major goal was to gather data and input from area residents and other concerned parties regarding key needs, priorities, issues, and other relevant factors impacting the quality of life in East Biloxi. The information collected would be used by EBCC officials to help inform future programmatic, service, and policy initiatives designed to improve the quality of life in East Biloxi.

For data collection purposes, the East Biloxi community boundaries were defined as White Avenue on the West; the Back Bay on the North; the Ocean Springs Bridge on the East; and the Gulf of Mexico on the South.

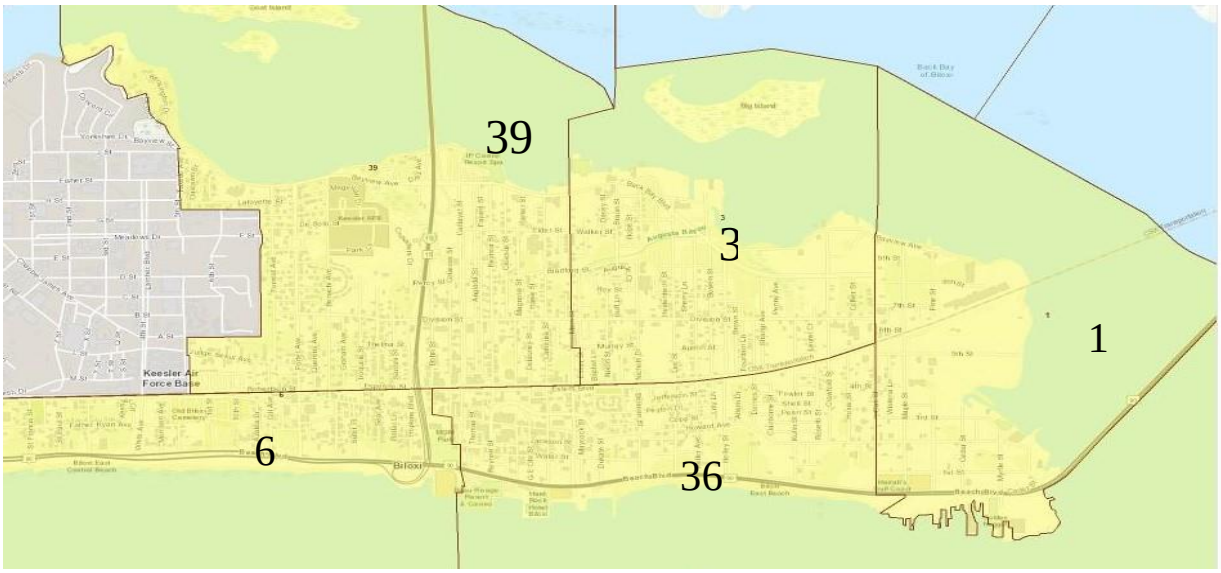
Research Methodology

The research methodology used to conduct this CNA consisted of a mixed-methods approach that utilized both quantitative and qualitative measures. Quantitative measures included conducting secondary data analysis of socio-economic U.S. Census data describing the East Biloxi community, and administering a comprehensive online survey (n=378) to gather data from community representatives. Qualitative measures included gathering perceptual data from community events; conducting three focus group sessions (n=16); conducting primary and secondary mapping activities; and conducting a youth photo voice and feedback activity. Survey and secondary data were analyzed using descriptive procedures including mean scores, frequency counts, percentages, and cross-tabulations. Qualitative data were evaluated using narrative analysis, frequency counts, and cataloguing techniques.

Statistical Profile of Area

Figure 1 presents the 5 census tracts (1, 3, 6, 36, 39) comprising the East Biloxi area as related to the boundaries articulated by EBCC officials (ACS, 2019). The total population of the target area is approximately 8,035 persons consisting of 4013 males (49.9%) and 4022 females (50.1%). The racial distribution is 50.5% White; 36.1% Black; 6.8% Asian; and 6.6% other races. There are wide numerical fluctuations across the 5 census tracts depicted in Figure 1 (e.g., Census tract 1 has a population of 227 whereas Census tract 39 has a population of 3,420).

Figure 1 Census Tracts for East Biloxi



Census tract 1 has the oldest median age population (60.6 years); the highest percentage of persons with less than a 9th grade education (38.5%); the highest disability rate (25.1%); the lowest percentage of persons in the labor force (27.7%); the highest percentage of persons speaking a language other than English (37.9%); the lowest median household income ($10,357 annually); and the highest percentage of all persons in poverty (63.4%).

Census tract 3 has the highest percentage of female headed households (42%); the highest unemployment rate (19.9%); and the highest percentage of persons receiving SNAP assistance (44.8%). Census tract 36 had the highest percentage of married couples (32.5%), and Census tract 39 had the lowest unemployment rate (3.5%). In summary, Census tracts 1 and 3 tend to exhibit the highest levels of social and economic distress.

Summary of Key Findings

The following section summarizes key findings from data collection activities conducted in support of the community needs assessment. Below are findings identifying “needs” and “priorities” that emerged from the online survey and interactions with community representatives. While many issues emerged from data collection activities, this project’s main

thrust was on identifying "needs" and "priorities" first and foremost. This report's findings are organized and presented by data collection methods utilized to conduct the assessment.

Survey responses were gathered using Qualtrics online survey collection software. Respondents completed the survey by using a personal computing device, or by visiting one of three "survey hub sites" providing online access to the survey. Key findings are reported for the following questions as identified by EBCC leadership:

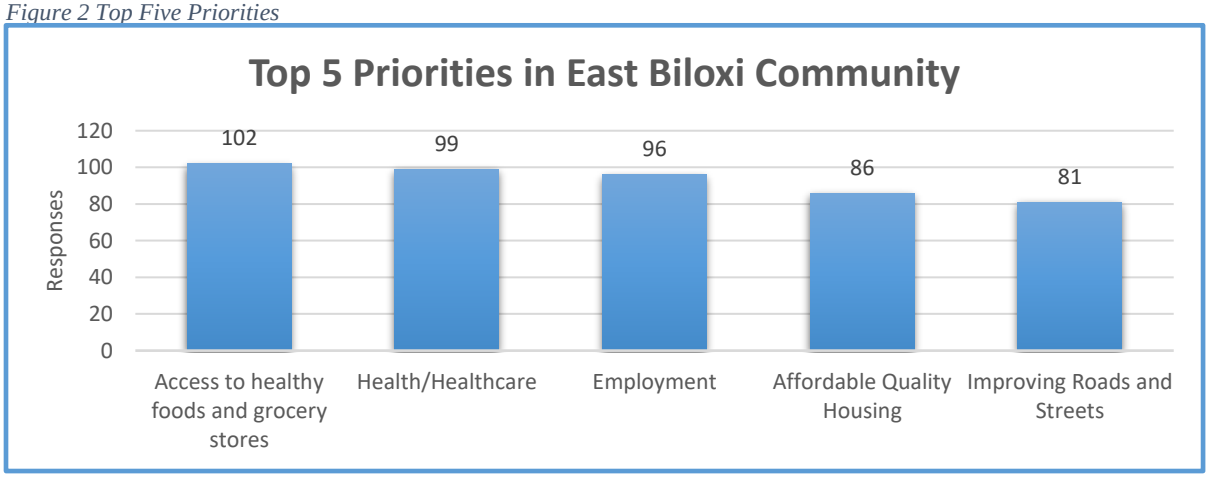
1) Top 5 priorities in the East Biloxi Community (Q17)
2) Top 5 Needs to be Done to Improve Quality of Life (Q25)
3) Most Pressing Employment Needs (Q20)
4) Most Pressing Education Needs (19)
5) Most Pressing Healthcare System Needs (Q21)
6) Most Pressing Housing Needs (Q22)
7) Most Important Needs Concerning Civic and Community Engagement (Q23)
8) Most Valuable Assets in East Biloxi (Q26)

Online Survey Results

A demographic profile review of survey respondents indicates the majority of respondents (65%) actually lived in East Biloxi; were female (63%); married (43%); Black/African American (58%); lived near Nichols school (61%); and had an income between $20,000 and $74,000 (51%). Three hundred seventy eight (378) respondents completed the survey as of October 21, 2019. The following is a listing of key online survey responses:

Top Five "Priorities" identified by Online Survey Respondents (Q17)

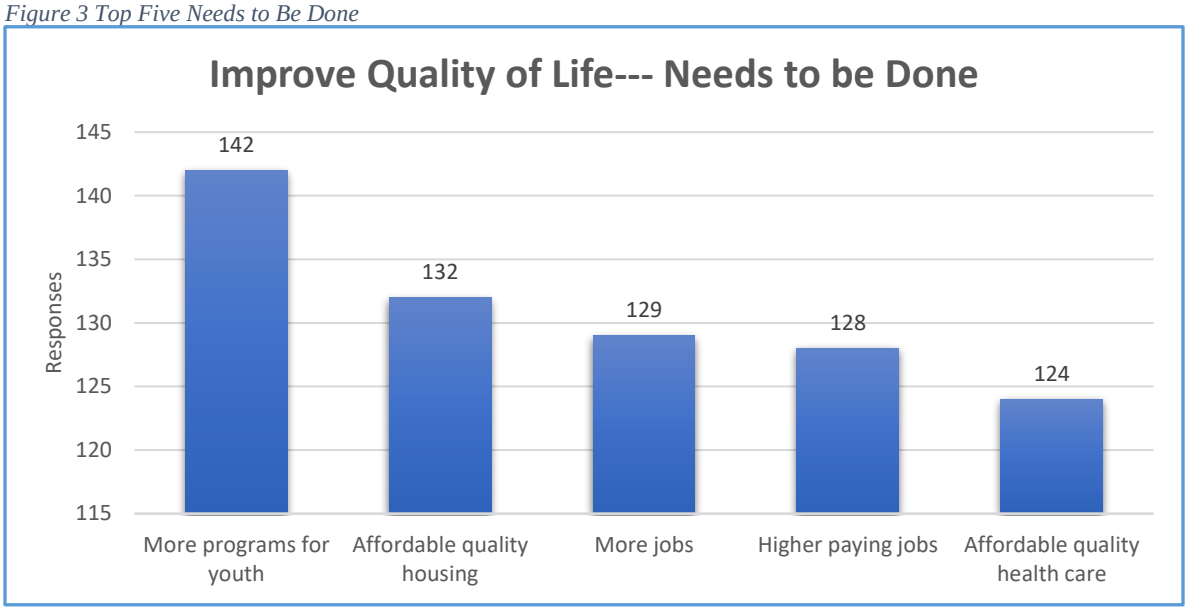
Figure 2 Top Five Priorities



When survey participants were asked to select their top five "Priorities" for the East Biloxi community, access to healthy foods and grocery stores was number one followed by health/healthcare, employment, affordable/quality housing and improvement of roads and streets.

Top Five "Needs" identified by Online Survey Respondents (Q25)

Figure 3 Top Five Needs to Be Done



When survey participants were asked to select their top five needs to "Improve Quality of Life," they collectively selected more programs for youth, affordable/quality housing, more jobs, higher paying jobs, and affordable/quality healthcare.

Table 1 compares respondents' choices of the "top five priorities" and "what needs to be done to improve the quality of life" in the East Biloxi community. The common items appearing on both lists include Employment/Jobs; and Health/Healthcare.

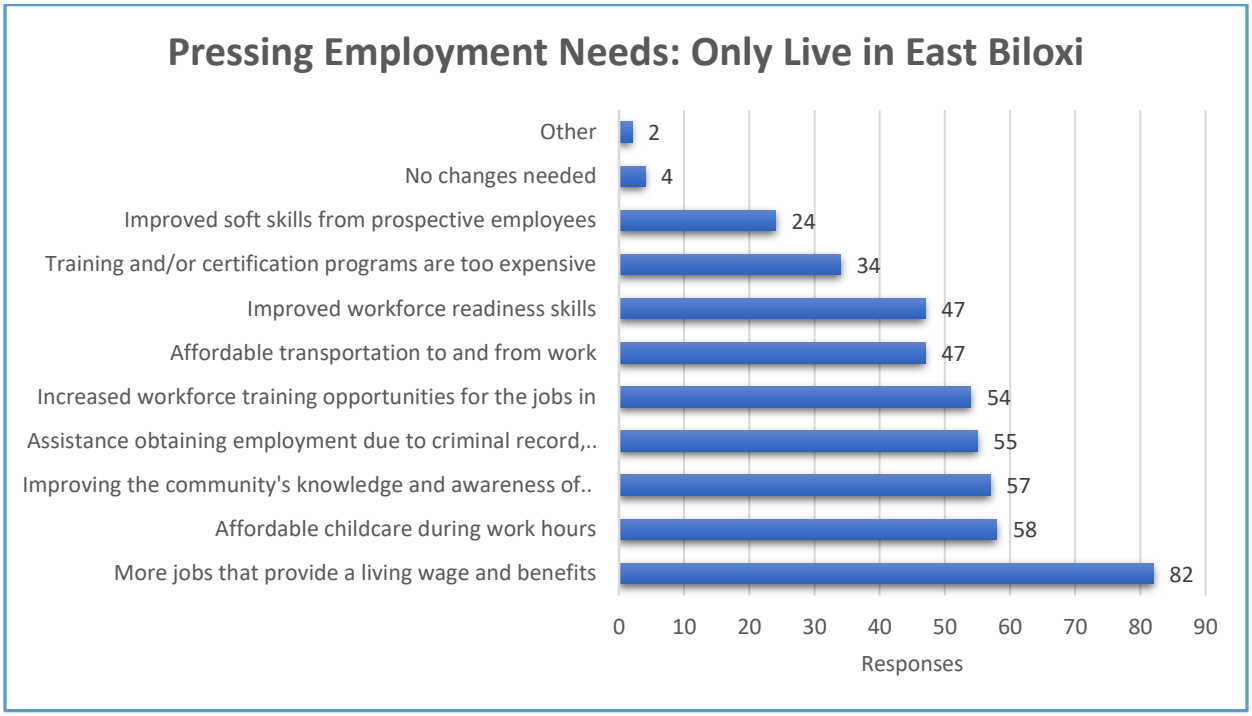
Table 1 Comparison of Priorities to Needs

TOP FIVE PRIORITIES	NEEDS TO BE DONE
(1) Access to healthy foods and grocery stores	(1) More programs for youth
(2) Health/Healthcare	(2) Affordable Quality Housing
(3) Employment	(3) More Jobs
(4) Affordable Quality Housing	(4) Higher Paying Jobs
(5) Improving Roads and Streets	(5) Affordable Quality Healthcare

The following figures provide a snapshot of survey responses according to the eight key questions identified earlier. These responses provide considerable detail regarding specific needs and issues identified by community representatives.

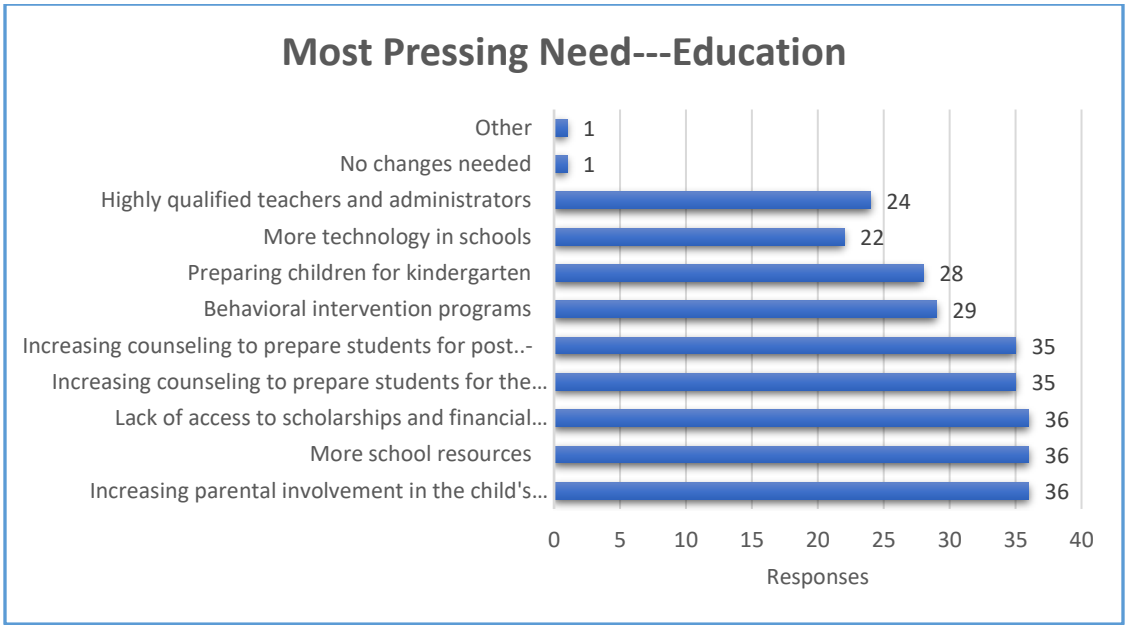
Most Pressing Employment Needs identified by Survey Respondents (Q20)

Figure 4 Pressing Employment Needs



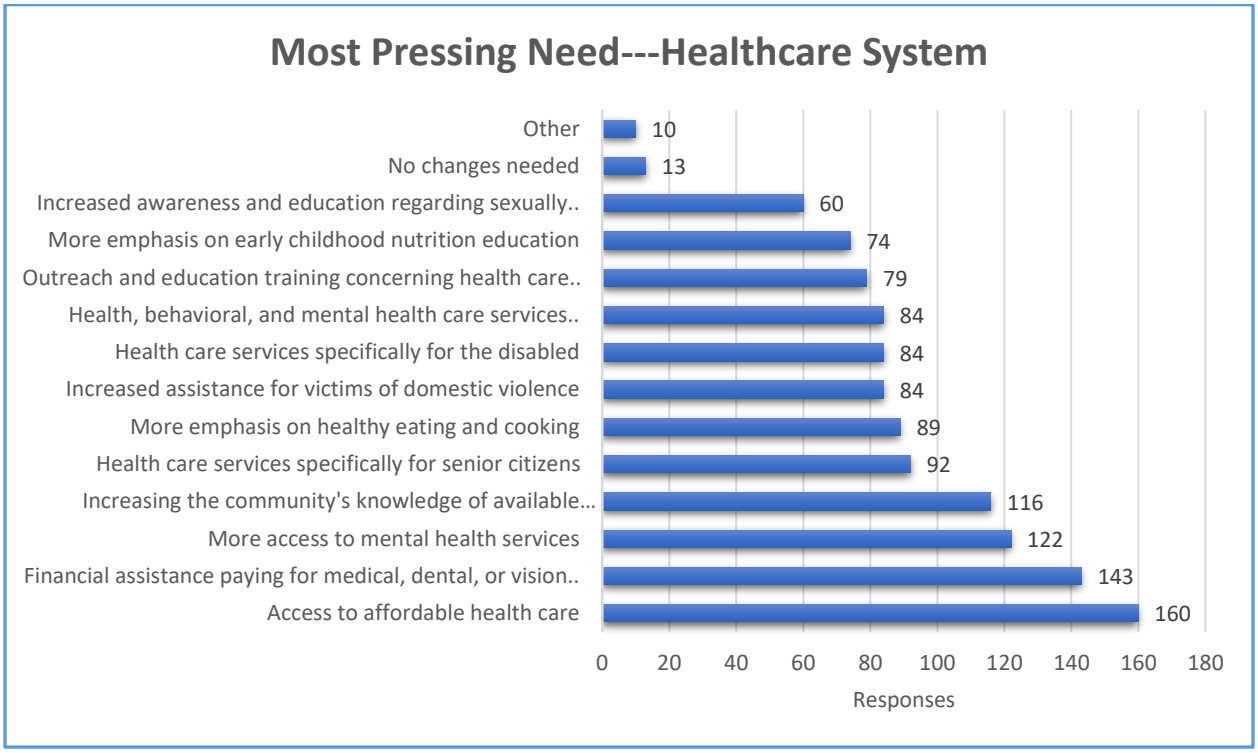
Most Pressing Education Needs Identified by Survey Respondents (Q19)

Figure 5 Pressing Education Needs



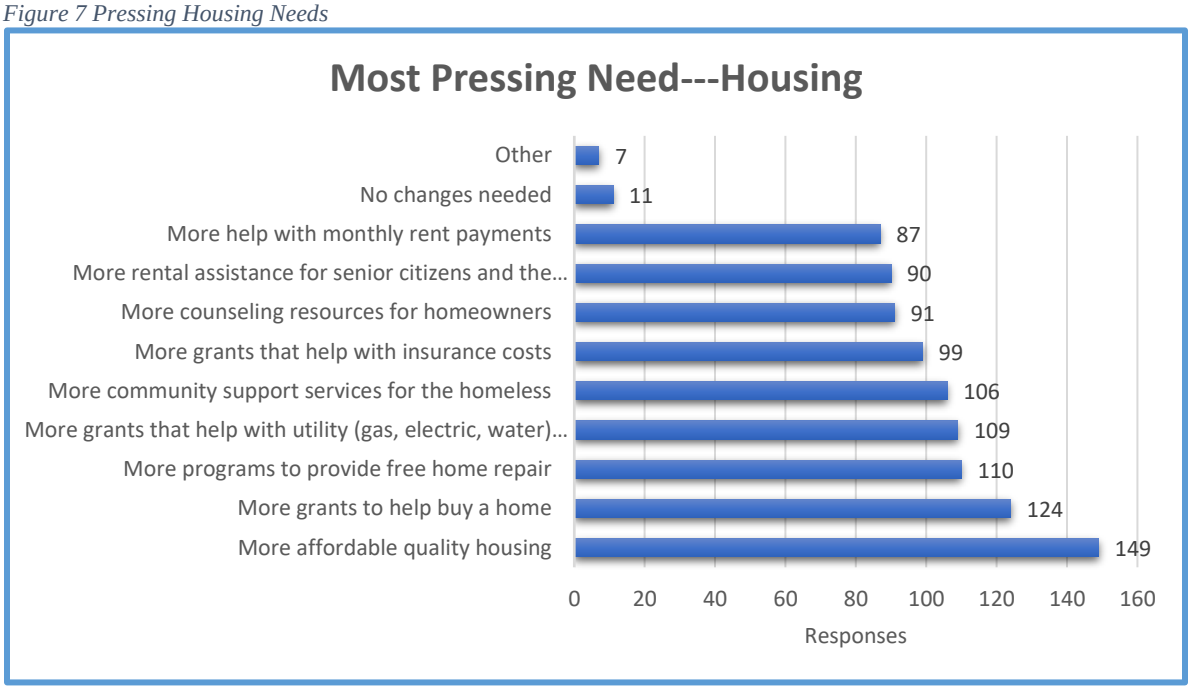
Most Pressing Healthcare System Need Identified by Survey Respondents (Q21)

Figure 6 Pressing Healthcare System Needs



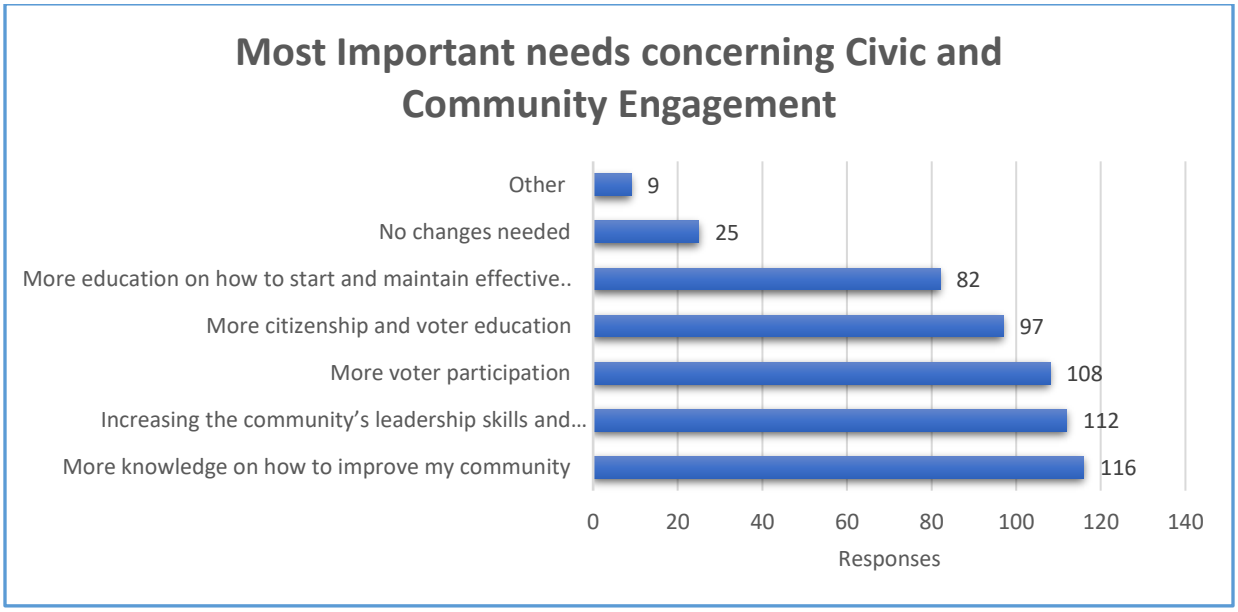
Most Pressing Housing Needs Identified by Survey Respondents (Q22)

Figure 7 Pressing Housing Needs



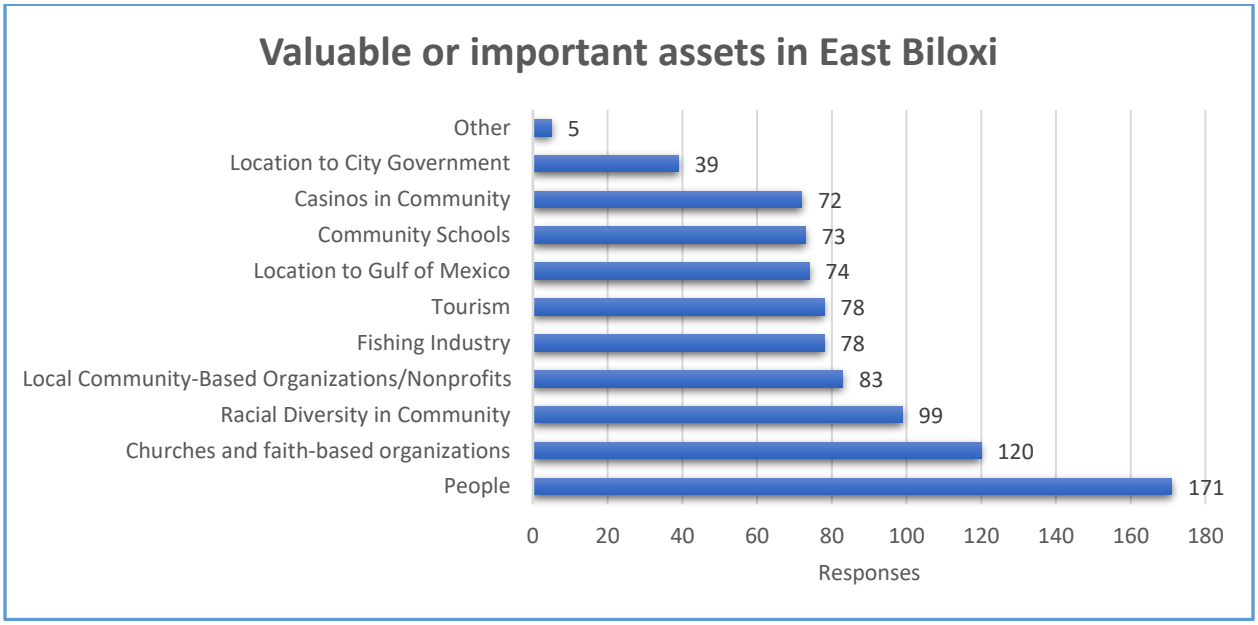
Most Important Civic and Community Engagement Needs (Q23)

Figure 8 Important Civic/Community Engagement Needs



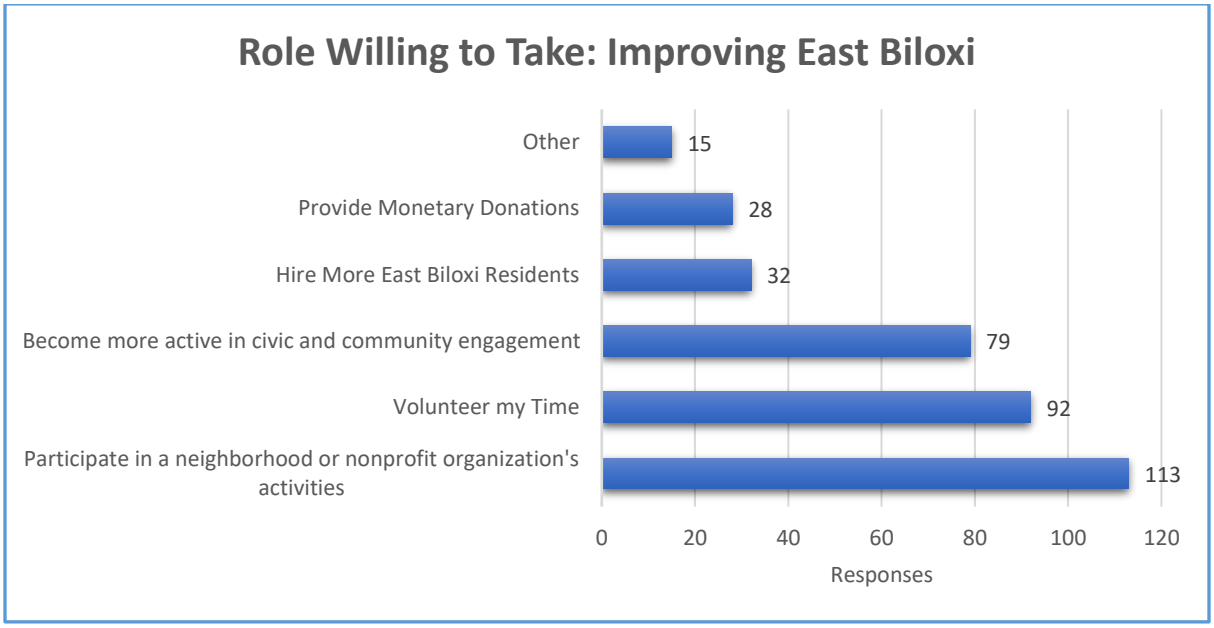
Most Valuable Assets in East Biloxi (Q26)

Figure 9 Most Valuable Assets In East Biloxi



Role Residents Willing to Perform (Q29)

Figure 10 Role Residents Willing to Perform



Focus Group Sessions

To help facilitate a deeper understanding of the online survey results, three focus groups were conducted on September 24th and 25th in the Community Meeting Room of the Hancock Bank located in East Biloxi. EBCC officials recruited participants for each group which included (1) Young Adults age 18 to 30 years old; (2) Cross-sector of Community Representatives (i.e., Service Providers, Business Owners, Individuals); and (3) Community Residents. When examining all three focus group discussions for cross-cutting themes, issues, and needs, several significant themes emerged. The following is a summary of those significant themes:

- "The People" of East Biloxi were viewed as being a positive force in the community and characterized by such descriptions as friendly, helpful, resilient, and working together

- Local organizations and non-profits were also viewed positively across all three groups and described as being helpful

- Strong negative opinions were expressed regarding the deficiencies associated with the local healthcare system ranging from being too expensive to poor service to being difficult to understand

- Strong negative opinions were expressed regarding accessibility to healthy foods and grocery stores in East Biloxi including such comments as low food quality; limited access

to fresh produce; low cleanliness; limited selection of food items; and difficulty in accessing additional stores

- Employment was viewed as a multi-dimensional problem associated with a lack of available jobs; difficulty in accessing existing jobs; and low wages and benefits associated with existing jobs

- Transportation was also viewed as a multi-dimensional problem associated with a public transportation system that does not serve the needs of local residents; a public transportation system that is difficult to access; a system severely restricted by local road & street construction; and transportation being needed to access everything from grocery stores, employment, and social services

- The amount and duration of local road and street construction created transportation, economic, and social hardships among local residents, as well as feelings of "un-fairness" on the part of city officials towards residents of East Biloxi

- Mental Health was identified as a major issue in East Biloxi from the standpoint of being a significant problem for many residents including a lack of available services to meet the mental health needs of local residents

- The impact of local casinos were viewed positively in terms of providing employment and promoting tourism, and negatively in terms of not paying sufficient wages and benefits, and not contributing enough to the local community

- Childcare was viewed as a problem from the standpoint of being too expensive and not having enough providers at an affordable price

Below are some notable quotes provided by focus group attendees while discussing various priorities, needs, and issues impacting East Biloxi: *

> *"People who live in poverty tend to have a "right now" mentality, they worry about today, not tomorrow!"*
> *–Cross-sector Community Representative*

> *"People die because [they do not use the healthcare] system" . . .*
> *"…[One] needs to be rich to be sick, if you are poor and sick you die!"*
> *–Cross-sector Community Representative*

> *"Minimum wage does pay for what you are doing, but does not pay enough based upon the cost of living"*
> *--- Young Adult Participant*

* (names withheld due to confidentiality assurances provided to focus group participants)

Photo Voice / Youth Feedback Session

During the September 14th, 2019 Photo Voice training session attended by East Biloxi Girls and Boys Club area youth, an informal feedback session was held with 5 youth participants. The participants ranged in grade level from 5th grade to 10th grade. When asked their opinions regarding community needs in East Biloxi, the youth provided the responses as indicated below:

Table 2 Youth Feedback Responses

More Parks /More Equipment	One Response—"feel everything is fine"
Clear Algae from Water—It is Impacting Small Businesses	Clean-up Trash
Activity Centers for Teens (more places to go)	Stop "Stink" Smell / Sewage / Drainage
Gangs are a Problem	Education on Using Finances
More Community-based Events (e.g., basketball, baseball, music, etc.)	

Disaggregated Data Report

Following the closing of the online survey on October 21st, EBCC leadership requested an examination of survey data across the categories of Race, Participants with Children Ages 0-18, Participants Ages 18-24, and by Landmarks. In examining the survey data across those categories, several consistent findings emerged. The responses of . . . "Access to healthy foods and grocery stores", "Health/Healthcare", "Access to affordable healthcare", "People", "More knowledge on how to improve my community", and "Increasing the community's leadership skills and knowledge". . . consistently appeared overall as the top rated priorities and needs regardless of race, age of participants, or by landmark.

However, there were notable differences in responses when racial categories were compared against each other. Below is a listing of differences by Race:

Disaggregation by Race

Pressing Employment Needs by Race --- "More jobs that provide a living wage and benefits" was the highest rated category for Whites and Hispanics; whereas "Assistance obtaining employment due to criminal record, conviction, and/or arrest" was for Black/African Americans; and "Training and/or certification programs are too expensive" was the top rated category for Asians.

Pressing Need Healthcare System by Race --- "Access to affordable health care" was the top rated category for Asians, Black/African Americans, and Whites. "Financial assistance paying for medical, dental, or vision bills" was the top rated category for Hispanics.

Most Important Civic/Community Engagement Needs by Race --- "Increasing the community's leadership skills and knowledge" was the top rated category for Asians, Black/African Americans, and Whites. "More knowledge on how to improve my community" was the top rated category for Hispanics.

Most Valuable Assets in East Biloxi by Race --- "People" was the top rated category for Black/African Americans, Whites, and Hispanics. Whereas, "Fishing Industry" was the top rated category for Asians.

Prioritized Needs by Race --- The top priority need identified for Asians was Health/Healthcare; the top priority need identified for Black/African Americans was "Access to healthy foods and grocery stores"; the top priority identified for Whites was "Reducing Crime"; and the top priority need identified for Hispanics was "Employment". English as a Second Language was rated #2 for Asians and #3 for Hispanics.

Conclusions

One of the primary goals of this community needs assessment project was to gather data and input from area residents and other concerned parties regarding key needs, priorities, issues, and other relevant factors impacting the quality of life in East Biloxi. Initial discussions with EBCC officials identified three key areas of interest to the Kellogg Foundation as related to this project. Those areas were Health, Education, and Economic Development. Subsequent conversations with EBCC officials further centered the project's focus around select survey questions such as prioritized needs, identification of valuable assets, and civic/community engagement. The above guidance received from EBCC leadership help guide this needs assessment project including the reporting of project findings. At the request of EBCC leadership, this summative report provides an abbreviated synopsis of major project findings without any accompanying recommendations. An additional, more comprehensive reference report will be made available to provide much more in-depth information on research findings. In summarizing this community needs assessment project, below are key conclusions derived from data collection activities:

(1) The East Biloxi community is one with significant socio-economic contrasts. A review of secondary data on the area reveals wide variations among the community in terms of income, housing, employment, health, and other socio-economic variables.

(2) The issues of "Employment/Jobs" and "Health/Healthcare" were consistently cited as the major needs for the East Biloxi community across all data collection activities.

(3) The issue of a need for an area "Grocery Store" was clarified to mean providing the community with a store that provides high quality items; is clean; provides quality, fresh produce and meats; is easily accessible; and is not high priced. The 'grocery store' issue appeared prominently across all the data collection activities.

(4) While not appearing that prominently in the online survey results, the issue of public transportation services to local area service providers and desired shopping destinations such as high quality grocery stores emerged as a significant discussion point in all three focus group sessions.

(5) Mental Health, or more accurately described during data collection activities, the lack of mental health services, was a major issue identified across all three focus group sessions. It was among the top online survey choices identified under the "Pressing Needs in Healthcare" category.

(6) "People" were identified in the online survey and in the focus group sessions as being the top asset in the East Biloxi community. Other cited community assets included parks, marinas, churches, museums, community centers, and multi-dimensional businesses such as local casinos with their various amenities.

(7) The community expressed a willingness (as reported via the focus groups and the online survey) to take an active role in improving the quality of life in East Biloxi.

Collectively, the seven conclusions identified above tell a story of common and unique needs, issues, and possible solutions as related to the East Biloxi community. They provide focal points upon which EBCC and other officials can begin to develop programs, services, policies, and activities that can help improve the quality of life in East Biloxi. The similarities between the online survey responses and the focus group responses provide solid evidence as to specific needs and priorities as viewed by community residents and representatives. Moving forward, it is up to community members, other representatives, and public, private, and non-profit organizations to collectively write the next chapter in the East Biloxi story. Using the conclusions, issues, needs, and priorities identified in this community needs assessment summative report can help EBCC officials begin to write that story.

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References

ACS. (2019). American Community Survey 5 Year Data (2013-2017). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved from http://www.census.gov

Perryman, A. (2019, February 28). Request for Qualifications - East Biloxi Community Needs Assessment. Biloxi, MS.

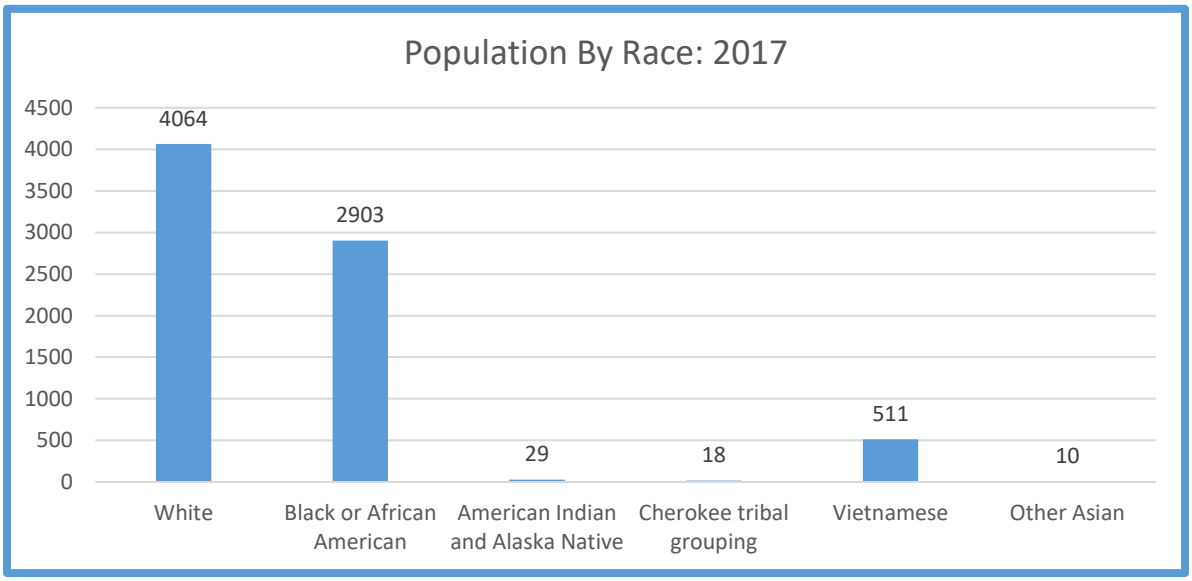
Appendices

Appendix A: Copy of Online Survey Questions

(NOTE: Due to the large number of pages needed to list all survey questions, those questions are being forwarded in a separate electronic Word file)

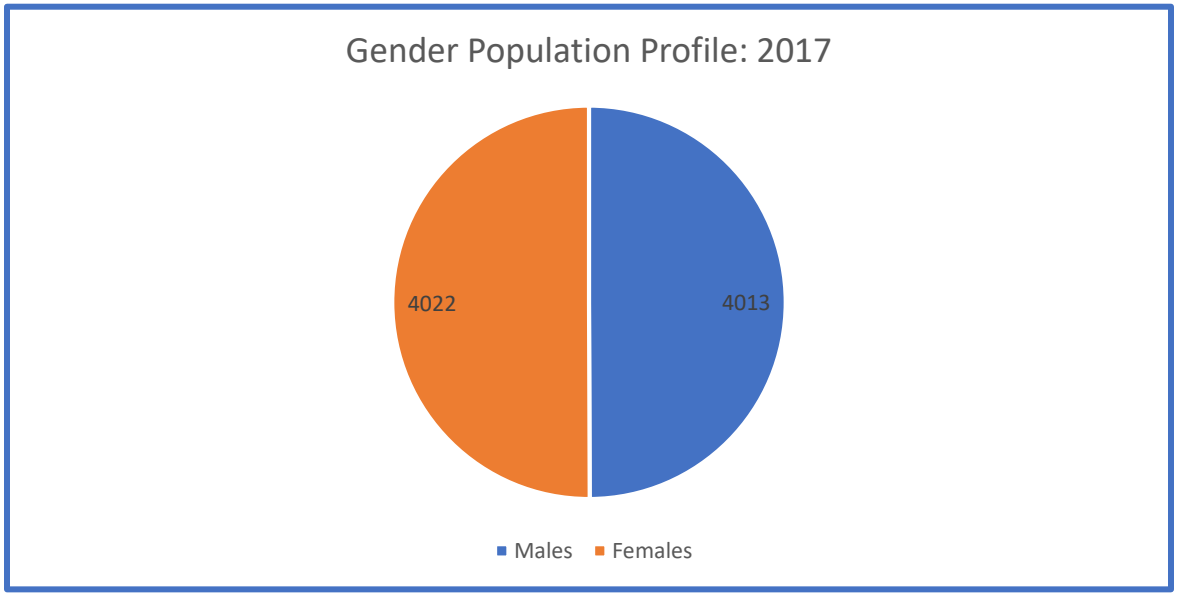
Appendix B: Key Demographic Data on East Biloxi Community

Figure 11 Population Comparison by Race



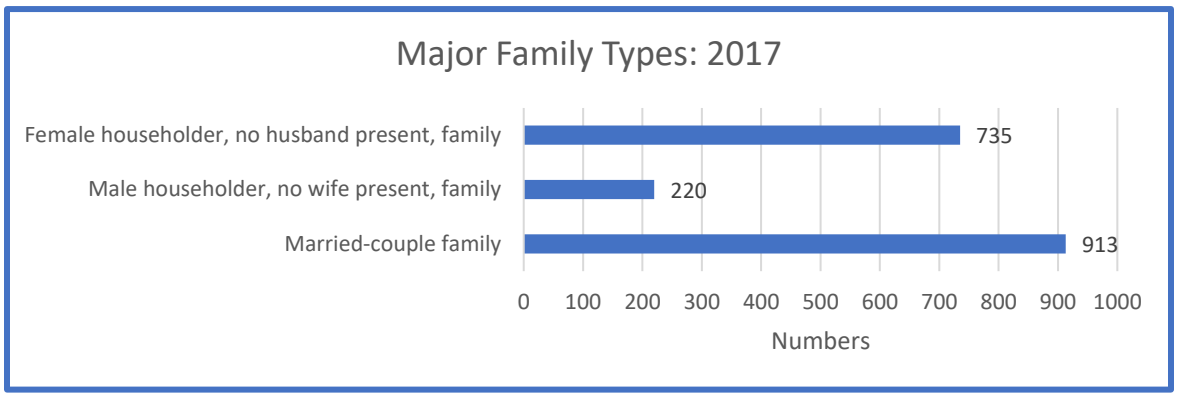
Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5 Year Data (2013-2017)

Figure 12 Comparison of Gender Population



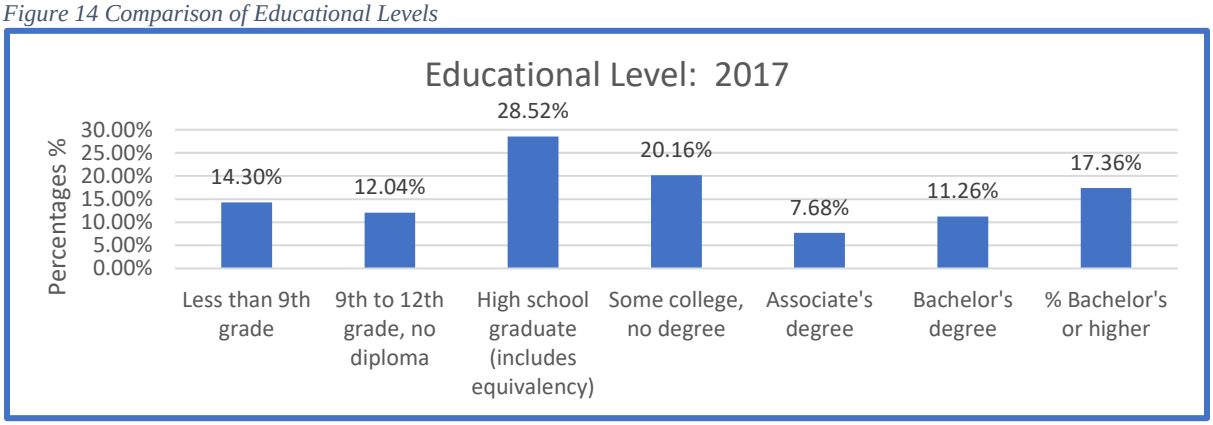
Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5 Year Data (2013-2017)

Figure 13 Major Family Types



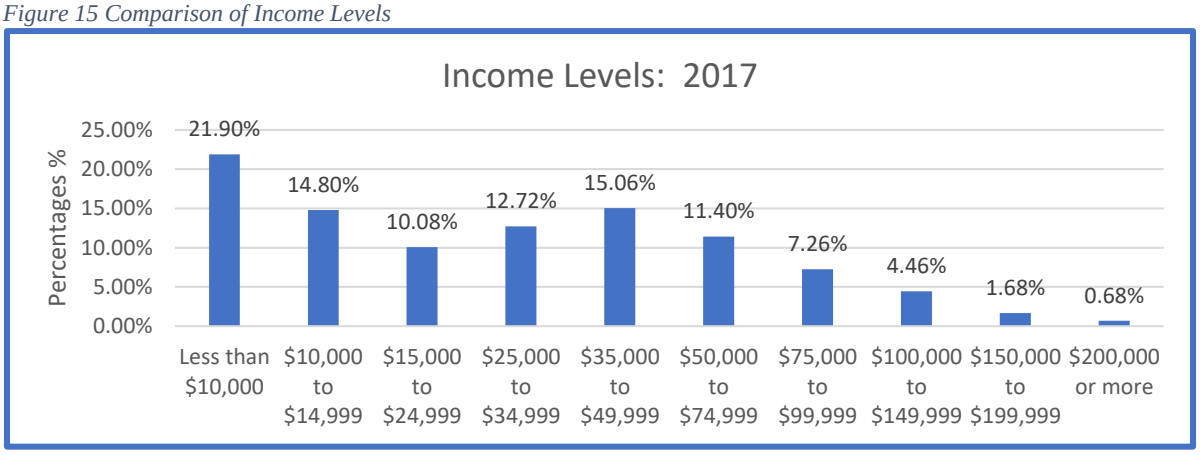
Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5 Year Data (2013-2017)

Figure 14 Comparison of Educational Levels



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5 Year Data (2013-2017)

Figure 15 Comparison of Income Levels



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5 Year Data (2013-2017)

Appendix C: Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Sessions | September 24 & 25, 2019
Objective: To obtain deeper/clearer understanding of answers to questions 17, 20, 21, 23, & 26

Icebreaker Question:
Q1) Tell us your name and how long you have lived (or worked) in East Biloxi.
Quality of Life (QOL) Questions:
Q2) Healthcare is a real hot topic these days, if you had to describe East Biloxi's healthcare system in a 3 to 4-word phrase, what would that phrase be? **(Survey question 21)**

Q3) Tell us what you like "most" about living/working in East Biloxi and why**? (Survey question 26)**
Q4) I want you to listen to (and see) what survey respondents have said they like most about East Biloxi. Then indicate if you agree or disagree with them by a THUMBS UP IF YOU AGREE or a THUMBS DOWN IF YOU DISAGREE. **(Survey question 26) (Handout #4)**
Q4a) What is it about (insert the variable, e.g., "people") that you like?

Q5) Take a few minutes to think about your feelings about accessibility to healthy food and grocery stores in East Biloxi. *Is accessibility to food or grocery stores a concern of yours?* Answer **YES** *(if it is a high priority concern)* **NO** (if it is not a high priority concern)**. (Survey question 17) (Handout #5)**
Q5a) What are some of your concerns? | Q5b) Why is this not a concern?

Q6) Continuing to think about priorities in East Biloxi, Would you agree or disagree with the following priority ratings of online survey respondents? **(Survey question 17) (Handout #6)**

Q7) Let's talk about your opinion of the "most pressing employment needs in East Biloxi." The list before reflects what online respondents consider to be the most pressing employment needs. Will you rate how pressing these employment needs are to you by raising 1 finger if "most pressing" and 2 fingers if NOT pressing. **(Survey question 20) (Handout #7)**

Q8) Let's talk about the most pressing concerns in East Biloxi's healthcare system. Survey respondents identified 7 areas of concern about East Biloxi's healthcare system. Please review this list of concerns. Using the numbers 1 through 7, prioritize this list of concerns with 1 being most important and 7 least important to you. **(Survey question 21) (Handout #8)**

Q9) Handout #9 is a list of civic and community engagement needs in East Biloxi as identified by respondents to the online survey. Let's discuss how these needs best describe your understanding of civic and community engagement needs in East Biloxi. Say yes if it is a strong need, no if it is a weak need. **(Survey question 23) (Handout #9)**
Q9a) Why is this concern NOT a strong need?

Q10) Of all the things we have talked about today, which of these is the "one thing" that will, in your opinion, do more to improve quality of life in East Biloxi