

Gulf Coast Community Design Studio
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Gulf Coast Community Design Studio Honored for Katrina Reconstruction Work

BILOXI, Miss. —Mississippi State University's Gulf Coast Community Design Studio is being honored by the American Institute of Architects' regional organization for its work with the post-Hurricane Katrina recovery effort.

The AIA/Gulf States Region presented the College of Architecture, Art and Design's Biloxi-based outreach program with a 2007 Honors Citation during the national professional body's recent annual convention in San Antonio, Texas.

Selected from more than 120 submissions, the MSU design studio was among only 22 projects recognized for design excellence. In addition to Mississippi, AIA's Gulf States region includes the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Tennessee.

The honors were determined by the vote of a five-person jury made up of nationally prominent architects.

"In particular, the jury recognized the challenges of integrating ramps and stairs into the [now-required] elevated structures," said studio member Christine Gaspar. "The members lauded the design studio for successfully doing so."

During the recovery period, the Biloxi-based design studio has been involved in an array of projects that include both new and rehabilitated houses, a community park and an office for various redevelopment organizations.

"Since the hurricane, the studio has produced construction drawings for 7 new houses that have been completed, 24 houses currently in design or construction and 35 rehabilitated houses," Gaspar said. "Typically, the houses are approximately of 1,000 square feet and, with volunteer labor, are being built for around \$50 per square foot."

In the immediate aftermath of Katrina, design studio professionals provided early assessment maps, planning assistance and preliminary design services, Gaspar explained. Coordinating closely with various organizations that provide funding, case management and volunteer construction labor, the GCCDS team continues to provide design assistance to individuals from low-income households needing help to rebuild, she added.

More than 60 homes in East Biloxi alone have been designed to date through the work of the studio.

"Whether rehabilitations or new constructions, the projects are designed through close relationships with the residents," Gaspar said. "The work is very much about preserving the dignity of individual's faced with unimaginable hardships."

“The common aspects of the work at every scale are a commitment to citizen participation and an effort to rebuild diverse and complete cities that preserve and restore the unique natural and cultural resources along the coast,” she observed.

About The Gulf Coast Community Design Studio

The Gulf Coast Community Design Studio (GCCDS) is a research arm of MSU's College of Architecture, Art + Design. It is a nonprofit organization, established to provide community planning and architectural design services to traditionally underserved populations. To learn more about the Gulf Coast Community Design Studio, please visit: <http://www.gccds.org>

NEWS EDITORS/DIRECTORS: For additional information, contact Gaspar at 228-435-7180 or cgaspar@caad.msstate.edu. She also can provide high-resolution images of various projects with which the design studio has been involved.