

Rebuilding Infrastructure & Culture On Biloxi's Oak Street

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It was a meeting of the minds for some people who live in East Biloxi. Wednesday night people came together to give their feedback on plans to revitalize the Oak Street community.

"We lost so much of the face of our community, and that's something we cannot reclaim," said Thao Vu with the Boat People SOS.

Vu says after Hurricane Katrina, very few homes and businesses returned to the area. Instead, many relocated to D'Iberville and Ocean Springs. That's why her organization, as well as several others from the Vietnamese Community are working together to make plans to rebuild Oak Street.

Wednesday night was the first of many workshops aimed at getting a uniform design for the historic community.

"Change can be good, but there's also many things that you want to keep - tradition, cultural heritage. And that's something we keep in mind on Oak Street," Vu said.

Architect David Perkes agrees.

"It's all kinds of various pieces in motion," Perkes said.

He is the director of the Gulf Coast Design Studio, the company that worked with property owners and residents to create five design plans for Oak Street. They include a Vietnamese District, similar to what you would see in larger cities, a residential area, an international street made up of restaurants, bars and shops, a mixed use community and a tourist condo living area.

"Our role here is to help the community visualize their own community," Perkes said.

Right now, Oak Street is lined with several residences and businesses. It is also the home of a Vietnamese church where hundreds of people attend mass every day.

"We would like the leaders of these churches and temples to really help because they are the leaders of this community," said Vu.

Some residents are still torn on which plans will work best, but they do want more grocery stores that serve both Vietnamese and American food. They also want restaurants that stay open later. All are ideas organizers call key to revitalizing a community where everyone will want to live, work and play.

If you were not able to attend the meeting and you have some ideas, can call Boat People SOS at 228-436-9999.

by [Elise Roberts](#)