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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GULFPORT MAIN STREET TO AWARD SMALL BUSINESS GRANTS

The Gulfport Main Street Association will award approximately \$15,000 to existing small businesses in the downtown Gulfport district. This grant program is the organization's first ever business grant program and is intended to assist businesses in the downtown area with less than 25 employees grow their business. The maximum grant per business will be \$2,500. Funds for this program were raised by the Gulfport Main Street board over the past few years through special events, membership dues, merchandise sales and other revenue generating activities. Applications may be obtained by emailing LBradley@gulfport-ms.gov or calling (228)868-3414 or they can be found on the city's website at www.gulfport-ms.gov. Businesses must have been in existence in their downtown Gulfport location for at least 60 days before applying and applications are due September 19, 2014 at noon. This is a reimbursable grant program, which means the grant can be used to reimburse the applicant for expenses incurred after grant approval or approved expenses may be paid directly to the vendor from which items are purchased.

"Downtown Gulfport has experienced nothing short of a transformation over the past eight years. Main Street has worked hard as an advocate and promoter and now we are excited to have an opportunity to make a difference in an entirely different way. These small businesses are the backbone of this community and we are thankful for the opportunity to work with them to grow their strength and presence in downtown Gulfport." (Lisa Bradley, Gulfport Main Street Director)

"I've been a part of Gulfport Main Street since it began eight years ago and this board continually has discussions about how we can make an impact on the businesses who have invested in downtown Gulfport. We have worked hard to raise funds and even harder to figure out the best way to spend them with the most impact. I believe that these grant funds have the ability to inspire

businesses to try something new or do something that increases their capacity to do business. Our organization is here to support them in a number of ways; this is just one more program that we believe will strengthen the foundation of downtown Gulfport.” (Johnny Olsen, Chairman, Gulfport Main Street Association)

“It does my heart good to see downtown surviving as a vibrant entertainment, dining and nightlife district. I am pleased with this progress and hope to see more retail and housing development in downtown over the next few years. Having people take pride in these magnificent old downtown buildings and fill them with people who are enjoying their everyday business and special occasions in them is what we have been trying to achieve for decades. I think the momentum is building and this grant program is another way Main Street is working to support it.” (John Herral, Main Street board member)