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Renaissance Guild Established to Promote Sustainable Developments

GULFPORT, MS— The Gulf Coast Renaissance Corporation (Renaissance) and Mississippi State University's Gulf Coast Community Design Studio (GCCDS) launched the Renaissance Builder & Developer Guild at a press conference today. The mission of the Guild is to foster the redevelopment of communities as environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable through responsible land use practices with a particular focus on mixed-use and mixed-income communities.

"The people of the Gulf Coast deserve quality developments that provide safe housing in desirable, walkable communities for all income levels," said Renaissance Chairman Anthony Topazi. "The Renaissance Guild was established as a means of measuring a project's contribution to meeting this objective."

The program, sponsored by Renaissance and administered by GCCDS, will endorse projects based on a set of Development Standards which encompass the generally recognized best practices in Smart Growth.

"The standards are designed to encourage development within existing communities that strengthen the community and create well-used and well-loved neighborhoods," said GCCDS founding director David Perkes. "The development standards address project decisions at a range of scales, starting at the site selection and continuing down in scale to the energy efficiency and healthy environment of the individual house."

While all Renaissance-sponsored projects will adhere to the development standards, the Guild also seeks to reward projects sponsored by others that meet the same standards. Projects earning a minimum score by the GCCDS will receive a Guild endorsement and will be eligible for below-market financing through the Mississippi Gulf Coast Development Fund.

The Guild also wishes to assist municipalities and counties in improving development quality in the region and is offering up at no cost its development standards as a tool local officials may use in their approval processes.

The Guild will offer regular educational forums on best practices and encourage communities to craft a vision and adopt standards for development and construction which respond to community values of architectural beauty and distinctiveness.