



## Wilmington Vision 2020: A Waterfront Downtown

PREPARED BY  
EDAW, Inc.

**EDAW**

ADOPTED DECEMBER 14, 2004

PREPARED FOR  
City of Wilmington, North Carolina



# Acknowledgements

## Wilmington City Council

---

\_\_\_\_ Spence H. Broadhurst, Mayor  
\_\_\_\_ Laura W. Padgett, Mayor Pro-Tem  
\_\_\_\_ Katherine Bell Moore  
\_\_\_\_ James L. Quinn, III  
\_\_\_\_ Jason Thompson  
\_\_\_\_ Bill Saffo  
\_\_\_\_ Lethia Hankins

## Wilmington Planning Commission

---

\_\_\_\_ Mark Saulnier, Chair  
\_\_\_\_ Stephen M. Stein  
\_\_\_\_ Walter L. Baker  
\_\_\_\_ Paul D. Boney  
\_\_\_\_ Louise McColl  
\_\_\_\_ Johnnie N. Henagan  
\_\_\_\_ Charlrean B. Mapson

## Vision 2020 Steering Committee

---

\_\_\_\_ City of Wilmington Staff  
\_\_\_\_ Sterling Cheatham, City Manager  
\_\_\_\_ Wayne Clark, Development Services Director  
\_\_\_\_ Kaye Graybeal, Planning Manager  
\_\_\_\_ Steve Bridges, Purchasing Manager  
\_\_\_\_ Gary Shell, Recreation and Downtown Services Deputy Director  
\_\_\_\_ Wendy Larimer, Recreation and Downtown Services Project Specialist  
\_\_\_\_ Robert Mike Campbell, Economic Development Liaison  
\_\_\_\_ Becky Pils, Long Range Planner  
\_\_\_\_ Wilmington Downtown, Inc. Staff  
\_\_\_\_ Susi Hamilton, Executive Director

# Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Vision</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction: A Call to Action</b>	<b>3</b>
Purpose	4
Planning Process	5
Previous Plans	7
<b>2. Existing Conditions: Setting the Stage</b>	<b>9</b>
Context	9
Socio-Economic Conditions	12
Market Conditions	13
Land Use	14
Development Opportunities	17
Urban Design	18
Open Space	22
Historic Preservation	23
<b>3. Downtown Framework: Addressing the Challenges</b>	<b>25</b>
Summary of Issues	26
Community Preferences	28
The Waterfront Downtown Plan	29
Measuring Progress	30
<b>4. Recommended Actions: Implementing the Vision</b>	<b>31</b>
Celebrate the Waterfront	32
Complete the Historic Core	40
Sustain the Momentum	50
Do's and Don'ts	62
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>64</b>

# Executive Summary

## Introduction

Across the country people are rediscovering their cities, recognizing the importance and benefits of strong downtowns, and appreciating the inherent beauty and unique identity of the urban waterfront. In Wilmington, downtown is the economic and social heart of the city and the open spaces of the Cape Fear River corridor are the lungs. Both are essential to the City's health.

This Plan seeks to more fully connect downtown Wilmington and the Cape Fear River to achieve the vision of a waterfront downtown that is an inviting mixed-use destination, vital for living, working, learning, visiting, and playing. The intent is to create a lively sense of community that is based on the foundation provided by a special water body and strengthened by the urban flavor of an authentic downtown.

The development of this Plan built upon past planning efforts and was conducted with extensive public participation. The planning process included: (1) an identification of needs based on the concerns of local citizens and stakeholders, and an analysis of existing conditions; (2) the preparation of potential alternatives for consideration and prioritization; and (3) the development of broad, strategic directions and specific implementation recommendations. The Plan is a blueprint for the future and balances long-term and sustainable solutions with clear and immediate action.

## Issues

Wilmington is at an important point in the continuing evolution of downtown as the focal point of the region. The analysis of the current physical, socio-economic, governmental, and programmatic conditions revealed several key issues for downtown Wilmington. These include:

- Negative Quality of Life Perceptions
- A Poor Orientation to the River
- An Incomplete Downtown Development Pattern
- Excessive Amounts of Surface Parking
- Not Enough Downtown Housing
- Missing Downtown Open Spaces
- A Lack of Public and Private Investment and Funding
- Regulatory Challenges
- Threats to the Quality of Urban Design
- Few Young Adults

## Benchmarks

To measure implementation toward the vision, the Plan includes several growth benchmarks and goals. The benchmarks for 2020 include increasing the downtown population by 3,000 new residents, 1,500 new housing units, 10,000 new jobs, and 200% more hotel rooms. In addition, the goals include the utilization of 90% of downtown parcels and a building vacancy rate of less than 10%.

## Recommendations

The Plan includes a comprehensive range of recommended actions to address the identified issues and meet the quantified benchmarks. Recommendations for implementing the Vision 2020 Plan are organized around three central objectives: celebrating the waterfront, completing the historic core, and continuing recent progress. Strategies, prioritized actions, and implementation steps have been developed to ensure immediate and tangible results that will help catalyze development and continue to strengthen downtown Wilmington.

### Objective I: Celebrate the Waterfront and draw inspiration from its unique strengths.

1. Activate the water's edge with a series of waterfront parks and distinct open spaces, including an expanded Festival Park (Riverfront Park), an expanded Dram Tree Park, and a new city park at Holmes Bridge..
2. Connect people to the river by improving access along key routes, including Chestnut and Market Streets.
3. Promote waterfront attributes and events with targeted marketing efforts and increased activities and amenities to raise the profile of downtown.

### Objective II: Complete the Historic Core with high-quality, mixed-use infill development.

4. Partner with stakeholders to achieve public benefits on development projects with mutual interests.
5. Invest public resources to improve the public realm, including returning Front Street to 2-way traffic and creating Thalian Square.
6. Develop key infill sites by demonstrating a collaborative approach and using incentives for redevelopment of underutilized parcels.

### Objective III: Sustain the Momentum by continuing downtown's positive changes.

7. Address quality of life concerns by increasing downtown safety patrols, enforcing regulations, and enhancing the use of public space to improve the downtown experience.
8. Improve the regulatory environment to provide clear direction and strengthen the design review process.
9. Strengthen downtown organizations by coordinating activities, encouraging partnerships, and distinguishing roles and responsibilities.
10. Engage and expand the community by creating green connections with surrounding areas and coordinating redevelopment efforts.

# 2020 Vision



*In the year 2020, the City of Wilmington, North Carolina will be recognized as one of the eastern seaboard's most livable waterfront cities—a leading jewel of the mid-Atlantic region. Located downtown in a walkable, energized, and culturally rich environment, businesses, tourists and residents will live, work, learn, and play in a mixed-use downtown extending in a fine-grained pattern from bridge to bridge. This coexistence will create a dynamic synergy of uses that is reflective of Wilmington's past and worthy of its future. Residing downtown will be perceived as a highly desirable option for people of all types who wish to experience the global and cultural vibrancy, diversity, and creative sense of place that will characterize Wilmington's lively downtown waterfront.*

*To plan is human, to implement is divine.*

## 1.0

Introduction:  
A Call to Action

The Cape Fear River, one of Wilmington's many assets, is currently underutilized.

This Downtown Plan seeks a reunion between downtown Wilmington and the Cape Fear River. Rich in history, the waterfront was once the focal point for life in early Wilmington. Industrialization and its influences on mobility and settlement patterns have since altered that historical relationship between the people of Wilmington and their river. Suburban development continues to compete with downtown's historic center, necessitating the continual redefinition of downtown's purpose.

This Plan focuses on implementation and reclaims the waterfront as the urban foundation for downtown Wilmington's character and identity. By building on past planning efforts, this plan seeks to advance a vision for the future of downtown that renews the connection between the people of Wilmington and their use, understanding, and appreciation of the Cape Fear River waterfront.

Throughout America, there has been a resurgence in the regeneration of cities, much of which centers on the urban waterfront. Seeking an alternative to the homogeneity and inconveniences of the suburbs, people are rediscovering and valuing the order, energy, walkability, and

diversity of people and use that can characterize city life. This renewed appreciation that is fueling a return to the American city has generated an interest in reinventing industrial waterfronts as active and stimulating places for recreation and entertainment. Waterfront redevelopment can help illuminate a city's historical and cultural character, provide a respite from the fast pace of life, and spur economic development. Sensitively designed places that engage people and facilitate their use and enjoyment of the water can enhance the inherent beauty of the urban waterfront and create a unique identity for the City. Wilmington's waterfront downtown has that promise.

## Purpose

The purpose of this Waterfront Downtown Plan is to update the vision that was laid in 1997, for the future of downtown Wilmington over the next 16 years. The primary goal of this plan is to transform Wilmington from an historic downtown that happens to have a waterfront to a *waterfront downtown* that is a destination in itself, vital for living, working, learning, visiting, and playing.

### KEY OBJECTIVES

The key objectives of this Plan include creating a vision framework that:

- *Builds upon previous plans*—In 1997, the City of Wilmington commissioned its first Vision 2020 Plan and has prepared several studies in response to that vision. This Plan synthesizes the existing studies, surveys and reports on the status and recommended solutions for downtown in light of a current analysis.
- *Capitalizes on the city's existing assets*—This Plan uses Wilmington's heritage, architecture, and natural beauty and other strengths to guide solutions for the future. As one of the City's greatest resources, the Cape Fear River is a focus of this Plan.
- *Encourages a mix of uses*—The 1997 Plan recognized the value of diversity in land use—living, working, learning, and playing—as a means to spur economic development. This Plan considers the socio-economic and real estate market conditions related to realizing that goal.

The Plan addresses the use of festivals, events and other attractions as a means to attract people downtown. It also addresses the adequacy of open space for its viability for a variety of programs and activities.

- *Respects the historic fabric and attraction of the waterfront*—The height, scale, mass and quality of detail of new development can all impact existing historic and natural resources. This Plan addresses these issues in relation to the development process, including building height and zoning regulations.
- *Encourages a friendly streetscape environment*—Since successful American cities accommodate many modes of travel, the street network should be easily navigated by pedestrians, bicyclists and automobiles. The streetscape should provide a scale and quality of design that is interesting to the pedestrian, amenities to provide comfort, and adequate signage for locating cultural attractions, historic landmarks, and parking garages. This Plan considers the physical character of streets for their walkability and wayfinding purposes.



Many of Wilmington's streets are attractive and inviting.



Valuable space along the waterfront is currently used for parking.



People add vitality to a street.



A key objective of this plan is to reclaim the waterfront for the people of Wilmington.



## Public Participation

### City Of Wilmington

Development Services  
 Planning Division  
 Engineering  
 Economic Development Liaison  
 Parks, Recreation & Downtown Services  
 Central Services, Parking  
 Public Services, Utilities  
 Community Services, Code Enforcement  
 Wilmington Police Department  
 Members of City Council

### Downtown Stakeholders

Wilmington Downtown, Inc.  
 Downtown Wilmington Association  
 Wilmington Industrial Development  
 Tourism Development Authority  
 Wilmington Harbor Enhancement Trust  
 Cape Fear Community College  
 Residents of Old Wilmington  
 North Side Community Representatives  
 Real Estate Developers

More than 100 Individual Citizens

## Planning Process

The development of this Plan has included: (1) an identification of needs based on a review of existing plans and policies, interviews with local citizens, business owners and other stakeholders, and an analysis of existing conditions, including field reconnaissance surveys of the community's physical fabric; (2) the preparation of potential alternatives for consideration; and (3) the development of broad directives and specific recommendations.

Community input has been central to the planning process. Each phase of the process has been organized around a public meeting to ensure the Plan is well-informed with public sentiment and opinion. The meetings included a kick-off meeting and four subsequent workshops with the public. The kick-off meeting was held in January 2004 with the Steering Committee to review project goals and desired outcomes of the planning process. Members of the Steering Committee included: representatives from the

City of Wilmington's Planning Division; Parks, Recreation and Downtown Services Department, Economic Development Department, and Central Services Department; and the Executive Director of Wilmington Downtown, Inc.

The first public workshop, held in February 2004, summarized market and land use conditions, perceptions and quality of life concerns, and development opportunities and constraints, and provided an opportunity to receive public input on those conditions. The second workshop, held in March 2004, engaged citizens in the synthesis of three alternative development scenarios into a draft plan. The third workshop, held in May 2004, involved citizens in specific discussions on the draft plan and priority implementation strategies. The fourth public meeting, held in October 2004, was a presentation of the draft report at a joint work session of the Planning Commission and City Council.



Citizens discuss alternatives for Wilmington's new waterfront downtown during the second public workshop.

## Wilmington: A Historical Perspective

Although explorers had been visiting the region since 1524, settlement of the Cape Fear River did not occur until the early eighteenth century. The City of Wilmington was founded in 1732 as an English colony. It was laid in a gridiron plan, with a market and wharf marking the center of town at the intersection of what is now Market and Front Streets.

Wilmington had a significant role in the Colonial, Revolutionary and Civil War periods. It led the world in the production of naval stores for more than one hundred years, from its inception until after the Civil War. The city's surrounding pine forests supplied the production of important supplies such as tar, pitch, turpentine and rosin that were important to the British navy during colonial times. During pre-revolutionary times, citizens demonstrated political opposition against the Stamp Act in 1765. During the Revolutionary War, Wilmington troops fought the British at Moore's Creek. It was occupied by British forces commanded by Major James Henry Craig in 1781. During the Civil War, Wilmington became a major shipbuilding center. It was the last Confederate port to be captured by Union forces when it fell after two major battles.

In addition to its rich political and economic history, Wilmington was also a social and cultural center of activity in its early days. Before the end of the eighteenth century, the Thalian Society was established to promote theatrical performances, and during the mid-eighteenth century the Cape Fear Library Society



Historic Wilmington ca. 1900, before the automobile became fashionable.

Source:

was founded. The City also has a rich African American history as it became home to a large number of former slaves who sought employment in various mills at the waterfront. The City was home to North Carolina's first black attorney, George Mabson, North Carolina's first black doctor, Dr. James Francis Snober, and the country's first black professionally trained architect, Robert R. Taylor.

Wilmington experienced great prosperity during the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries as a railroad town and successful port. Historic maps indicate Wilmington had a fully functioning, mixed-use downtown where people lived, worked, learned, and played. While lumber and cotton mills, tar and turpentine distilleries lined the waterfront west of Water Street, to the east of Water Street

were markets and grocers, clothing and shoe stores, book stores, jewelry stores, a bank, a hardware store, printing and photography stores, a bicycle and repair store, barber shops, drug stores, boarding houses, mariner saloons, a candy and a toy store, a school, city hall and opera house. Conveniently interspersed with all of these uses were many dwellings.

Wilmington was North Carolina's largest and most important port city until about 1910, when the tobacco and textile towns of the Piedmont area began to grow. It was a leading exporter of cotton until about World War I when the shipbuilding industry sustained the City. Expanding railroad companies again led the City's growth until World War II. The population of downtown Wilmington peaked with the end of World War II (circa 1945).



Map of Wilmington, ca. 1945.

Source:

Circumstances changed dramatically when the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad decided to relocate its headquarters to Jacksonville in 1955. The relocation of the railroad, the post-war construction of highways, and the simultaneous exodus of families to the suburbs had a devastating impact on downtown Wilmington. By the middle of the twentieth century, Wilmington had substantially expanded south and east toward the Intercoastal Waterway and the Atlantic Ocean.

The Downtown Area Revitalization Effort (DARE, now known as Wilmington Downtown, Inc.) was established in 1976 to help revitalize downtown through historic preservation, adaptive use, and other initiatives. The historic communities immediately surrounding downtown, inhabited by the Residents of Old Wilmington (ROW), are particularly strong.

## Previous Plans

The City of Wilmington has taken several steps to improve the downtown quality of life and strengthen businesses in the city’s core. The first Vision 2020 Plan, prepared in 1997, encouraged an active, safe, and vibrant mixed-use downtown. The plan included 10 key strategies for realizing this vision. Since the completion of that plan, the City has undertaken various projects and initiatives to help implement these strategies. Several strategies have specific actions underway, while others require further definition for implementation. Table 2-1 describes the 10 strategies identified in the original Vision 2020 Plan, the actions that have been taken to realize those strategies, and additional action items that should be pursued.

	10 Strategies Identified in 1997 Vision 2020 Plan	Action Items Implemented or Underway
1	Encourage the relocation of major industrial and shipping uses out of downtown.	Pharmaceuticals PD recently procured land for a new office complex at the north end of the waterfront.
2	Support an increase in hotel and convention development to secure Wilmington as a business and tourism destination.	Ongoing efforts to provide a new Convention Center along the River, including current negotiations to procure waterfront land for a convention center and hotel site.
3	Coordinate with current and future growth of Cape Fear Community College to create a more cohesive and urban campus.	Ongoing coordination meetings with CFCC, and exchange of land parcels to strengthen campus and redevelop North 3rd Street.
4	Support an increase in residential development downtown, including infill and rehabilitated housing throughout the historic district.	Ongoing support for increasing residential uses downtown, including infill and rehabilitated upper floor apartments/condos and new mixed-use buildings throughout the historic district.
5	Support the extension of the Riverwalk between Homes and Memorial Bridges.	Riverwalk constructed from the Coastline Hotel to Nun Street.
6	Support the development of sufficient parking and innovative forms of transportation.	Three new parking garages have been constructed.
7	Support public spaces for civic activities along the River.	Construction of Riverwalk pocket parks such as at Orange Street.
8	Encourage preservation of historic resources, including the inventory of historic properties and the adoption of design guidelines.	Local historic district boundaries established, and National Register Historic District expanded.
9	Encourage a framework of development guidelines to protect historic quality, charm and urbanity of downtown.	Updated Historic District Design Guidelines, and CBD supplemental design regulations adopted.
10	Encourage a quality environment along the Cape Fear River, including retention of the green west bank.	West bank remains undeveloped but has not been officially designated as open space.

PREVIOUS PLANS CONSULTED FOR VISION 2020 UPDATE
Vision 2020 Plan (1997)
River Corridor Plan (1997)
Economic Development Study (2003)
Parks and Recreation Master Plan for the City of Wilmington 2003-2008 (2003)
Zoning Ordinance (2003)
Downtown Nightclubs, Downtown Forum and other papers re: nightclub issue (2003)
Wilmington Urban Area Multi-Modal Transportation Center Feasibility Study (Draft Final 2000)
Parks and Recreation Plan
Coastal Area Management Plan
Riverwalk Plan
Public Space Task Force Report (2004)
Downtown Task Force Update (2001)
Downtown Survey Results (2002)
Vision 2020 Summit Videos (2002/2003)
Wilmington Design Guidelines for Historic District (updated 1999)
The State of the Arts and Cultural Affairs (2003)
Downtown Parking Facilities Plan
NorthSide Community Plan (2003)
Revitalization Plan for 4th Street Business District
Development Action Plan for 4th Street Business District
Development Manual and Action Plan for Castle Street Community (1996)
10-Point Parking Plan (2002)
Dawson/Wooster Thoroughfare Land Use (1989)
Water & Sewer Capacity and Condition Studies
Solid Waste Procedures
Proposed UDO Stormwater Ordinance Revisions (2002)
Wilmington Downtown, Inc Market Report and Downtown Development Marketing Plan (2004)
Wilmington Downtown, Inc Strategic Plan (undated)

## Why Cities Are Important

There has been a resurgence in the regeneration of cities, especially waterfront cities, across the country. People are recognizing the importance of cities as historical and cultural centers. Unlike the suburbs, cities are usually more compact and ordered, more walkable and interesting, and more diverse in people and in use. Cities help illuminate history and civilization. As part of this shift in American thinking about the benefits of city life, there is also a new appreciation for the inherent beauty and unique identity of the urban waterfront.

Throughout history, cities have been important because they manifest the historical, social, political and economic culture that is unique to a physical place. Their urban form, architectural quality and character convey a sense of a community's heritage and ideals. Cities are places that can be experienced and re-experienced by the resident, the tourist, the young and the old. Cities are cultural artifacts of time and place, bringing awareness to where we come from and where we're going.

Cities that pre-date the automobile were designed on a grid to be compact and dense. The density, or closeness of buildings, creates a greater sense of order in the city than in the suburbs. The city's infrastructure encourages

walking as a primary means of mobility, and the proximity of people facilitates social discourse. The historic association of cities with commerce, government, education, and the arts helps generate a diverse mix of uses, creating a vitality and civic identity that is not found in the suburbs. People from all backgrounds tend to inhabit and visit cities because worldwide they are viewed as places of culture and expression, where differences are valued.

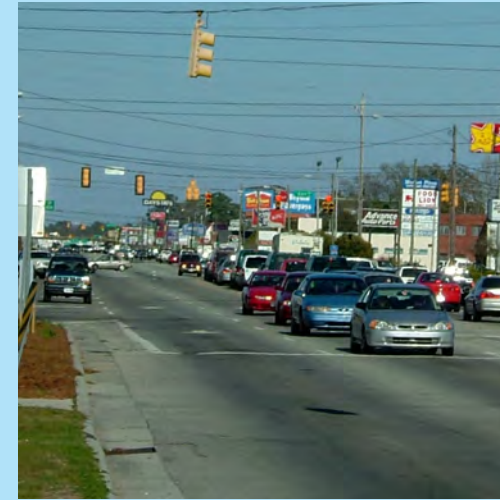
An urban waterfront is often a region's most valuable but unrealized asset. Most cities were settled along major waterways as a means for travel, economic sustenance and fortification. Before the advent of the automobile, the waterfront was often the front door to the American city. Early port cities like Wilmington were points of arrival for people and goods. Since other modes of mobility were limited, waterfronts also became the urban center for commercial activity and social exchange. The town market, a central meeting place, was often located close to wharfs to avoid moving heavy produce long distances. Today, cities are rediscovering and reclaiming their waterfronts as places for recreation and entertainment, leisure and respite. As urban destinations, they also have great potential to spur economic development.



An urban waterfront should provide generous space for walking and public activities.



Livable streets are a hub of activity for residents, employees, and students.



Suburbs lack the historical and aesthetic features inherent in downtowns.



A continuous and expansive riverwalk is a great public attraction.

# 2.0

## Existing Conditions: Understanding the Challenge

### Context

Wilmington's downtown is located on the Cape Fear River just 10 miles from the Atlantic Ocean. Convenient to major highways, including Interstate 40 and US Route 17, and the New Hanover International Airport, downtown is easily accessible from other parts of the region.

The City's Central Business District consists of approximately 50 blocks, situated between the Holmes and Memorial Bridges. The CBD extends irregularly east from the River to 4th and 5th Streets.

Although less than 10% of the City of Wilmington in area, downtown remains an important commercial, governmental, and cultural center for the region, with a mix of retail and residential uses. Historic buildings with a River backdrop provide a memorable experience.



*To know where you are going, you must know where you are.*



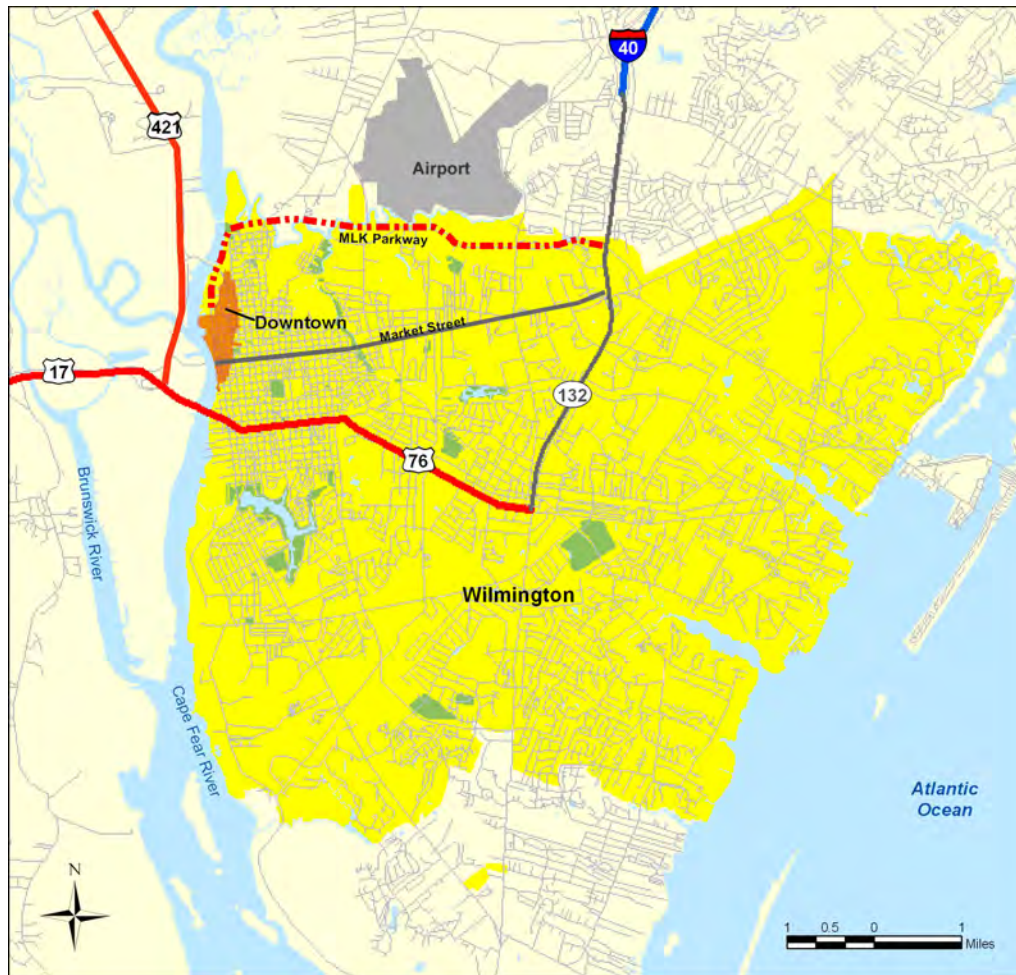
Historic buildings and a working Cape Fear River provide unique southern charm.



Visitors can enjoy any one of three nearby Atlantic Ocean beaches.



Architectural detail helps provide a memorable experience.





A trolley provides circulation throughout downtown.



Horse and carriage is a popular means of transportation for tourists.



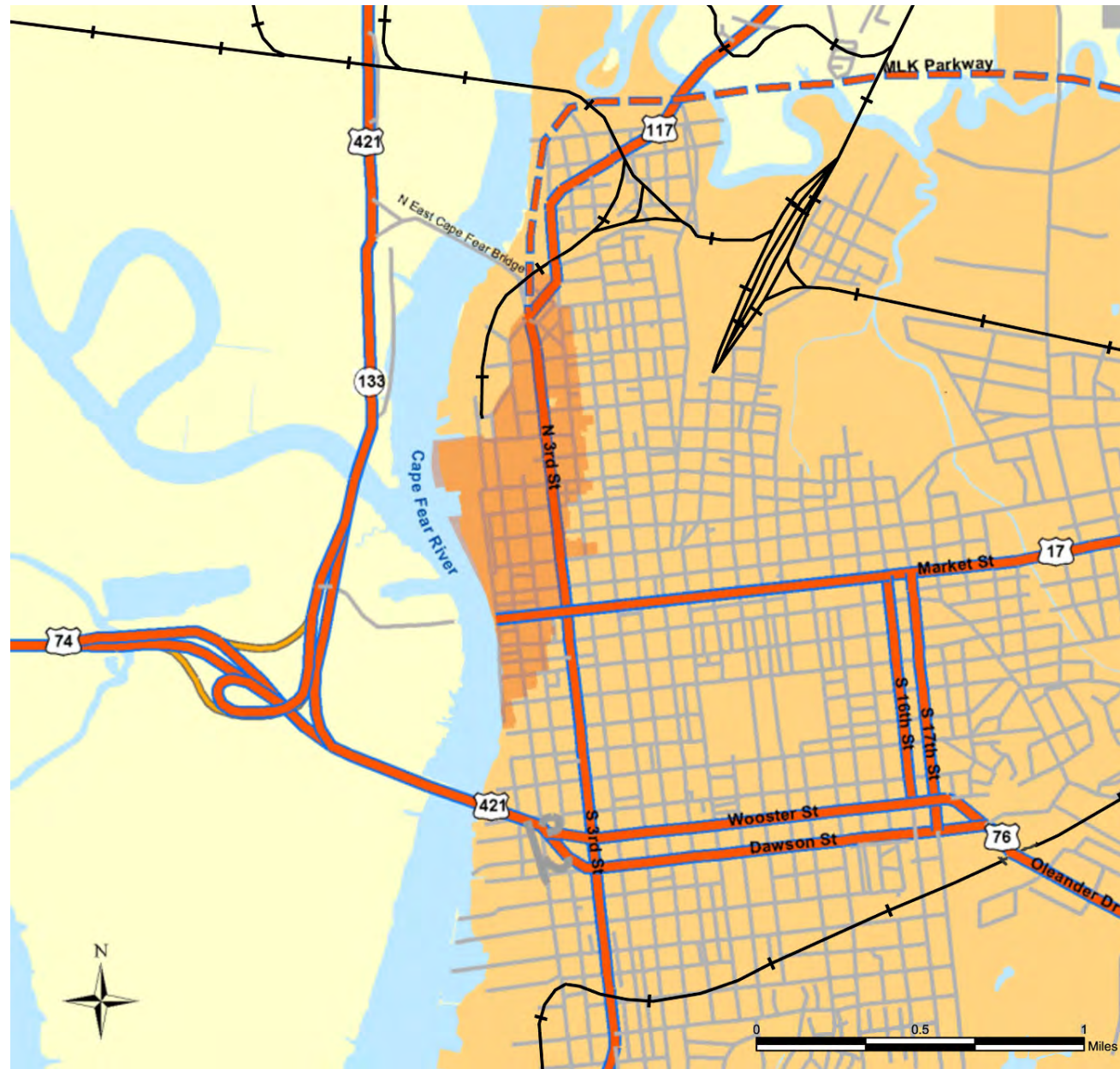
Completion of the Martin Luther King Parkway will improve access to downtown.

**TRANSPORTATION**

Downtown is prominently located in the greater Wilmington area and is easily accessible from major roadways. The newly completed Martin Luther King Parkway connects with 3rd Street at the northern entrance to downtown, providing primary access from Interstate 40. Access is also provided from the north by Route 117. Route 421/74 is the primary arterial from the south. Market Street is the major roadway from the east linking downtown to the rest of Wilmington. Two bridges flanking the CBD, the Holmes Bridge to the north and Memorial Bridge to the south, provide primary access to downtown from the west, including Route 421.

Roadways with the downtown core are arranged in a gridiron layout with primarily two-way vehicular movement. Traffic on Front Street is currently one-way northbound for several blocks, which is contrary to the new southbound traffic flow from Martin Luther King Parkway (scheduled for completion in 2005) to North 3rd Street. Portions of Water Street south of Market Street are one-way southbound.

Downtown is easily walkable, with trolleys and historic carriages available. While taxi service is available at the airport, it is not readily available downtown at all times.



Major access routes to downtown Wilmington.

VISITOR ATTRACTIONS AND EVENTS

Wilmington offers a number of attractions and cultural events for both tourists and local residents. The majority of visitors to the Wilmington area live in North Carolina.

One of the area's greatest attractions is its nearby beaches. Wilmington is easily accessible from three beaches along the Atlantic Coast, including Wrightsville Beach, which is located 10 miles from downtown, Carolina Beach, and Kure Beach. Most downtown visitors are linking their trip with a visit to one of the three local beaches.

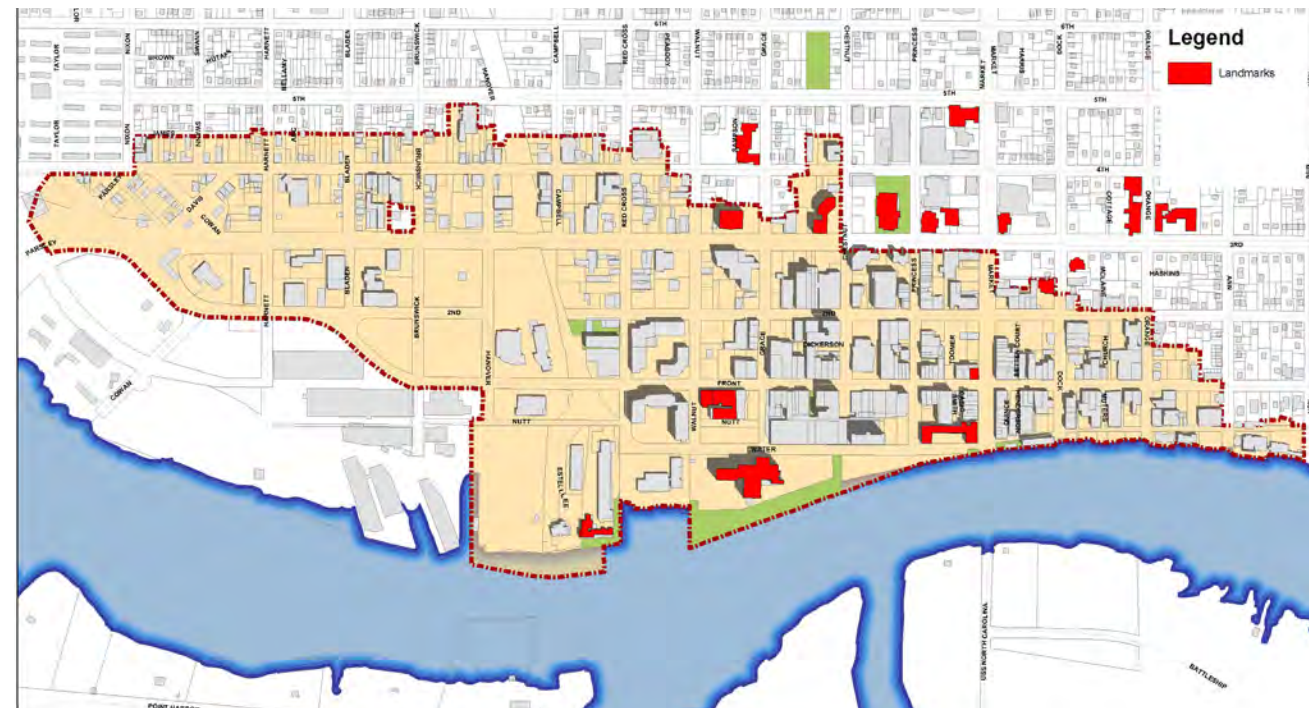


USS North Carolina

Another major attraction is the USS North Carolina. Located on the Cape Fear River's west bank, the battleship draws approximately 250,000 visitors per year.

There are currently about 14 festivals and events planned throughout the year. Events range from larger annual events such as the Azalea Festival and the newly instituted Nautical Festival in the spring that draw people from all over the region, to the more local Riverfront Farmer's Market and the Shindig at Sundown.

Wilmington's Department of Parks and Recreation is the leading agency that manages festivals and other events held downtown. Non-profits or other groups that are interested in planning an event must first contact Parks and Recreation regarding schedule, permits and regulations. A growing arts community and increased interest in recreational boating also look favorable for the future.



Landmarks include buildings with high visitor rates and memorable open space.



Festivals and other events attract people downtown.

## The Creative Class

Cities have and continue to be places where creativity reigns and diversity is valued. In his book, the *Creative Class*, Richard Florida suggests that the sector of the population that is highly educated, well-paid and tolerant of social differences—the creative class—is creating a new force that is stimulating economic growth in American cities.

The core of this class include scientists, engineers, university professors, poets and novelists, artists, entertainers, actors, designers, architects, nonfiction writers, editors, cultural figures, think-tank researchers, analysts, and other opinion-makers. Moreover, to attract and retain the creative class, cities must focus on quality of life issues, educational and cultural opportunities, and recreational resources.



## Socio-Economic Conditions

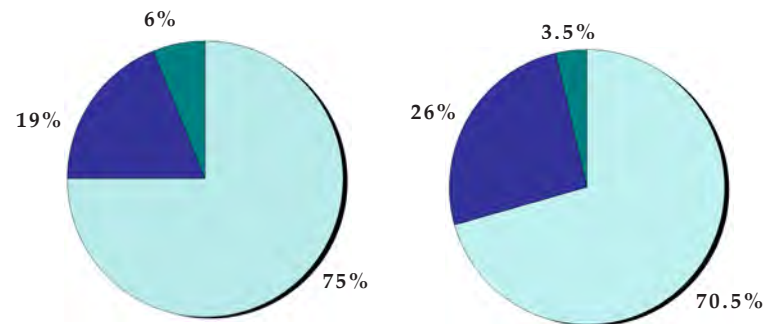
There is substantial additional capacity for a greater number of downtown residents. In 2000, the population in the CBD was less than one percent of the population for the City of Wilmington. Downtown's 490 residents (as measure specifically within the CBD), are slightly older, more educated and have higher incomes than their suburban neighbors. The downtown population is also largely white with just over a quarter African American and a small percentage of Asian, Hawaiian, Hispanic and other races and ethnicities. As expected, the household size downtown is about 25% smaller than that for the rest of the City.

Although there are significant close-in neighborhoods and a population of nearly 2,500 residents within one-half mile of the corner of Market and Front Streets, downtown has not been receiving its share of growth. While population growth in the City of Wilmington increased by 37% from 1990 to 2000, it has only increased by about 17% downtown.

	City of Wilmington	Central Business District (CBD)
Population in 2000	75,838*	490
Change from 1990	37%	17% (estimate)
No of Households	34,359	310
Average HH Size	2.1	1.6
Median Age	34 years	38 years
Median Household Income	\$34,731	\$47,000 (estimate)
Level of Education	17% college	25% college

\*excludes annexation

Source: City of Wilmington and ZHA, Inc.



Population by Ethnic Background in the CBD (left) and the City of Wilmington (right).

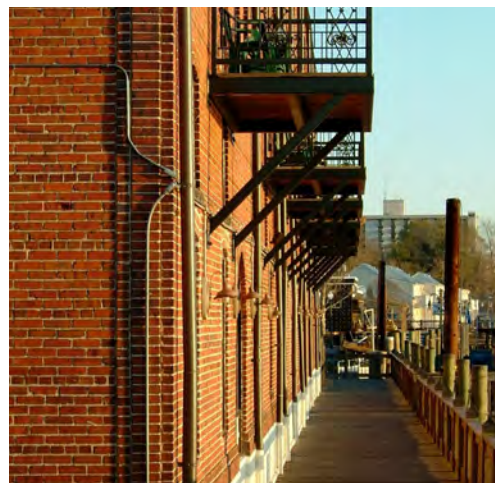
- White
- Black
- Other



## Market Conditions



Partially vacant office building.



Downtown housing.

The housing market has been increasing slowly downtown. There are approximately 400 total dwelling units in the CBD and a low vacancy rate of 7%. Nearly 90 percent are rental units, mostly one-bedroom in size. Rent ranges from \$300 to \$1,600 per unit. In early 2003, average prices of for-sale units were about \$180,000. Real estate professionals indicate that interest in downtown housing is high but that inflated land values and the complexity of developing in a dense area is deterring development.

The downtown office market primarily consists of professional service firms. Major employers include Cape Fear Community College, several banks and Castle Branch, a security firm. There are few large companies located downtown. While much of Wilmington's supply of office space is located downtown, recent corporate mergers and relocations out of downtown, such as the New Hanover County's government offices, have raised concerns.

Demand for competitive office space outside of downtown Wilmington is growing since development is perceived to be generally easier and cheaper in the suburbs. The vacancy rate for rentable office space is estimated to be more than 25%. Average rents are \$13.13 per square foot. There is potential growth in the pharmaceuticals manufacturing, research and development

industries, professional services sector, maritime activities, and the film industry.

The recent purchase of property in the northern portion of downtown, including a portion of the Almont Shipping property, is encouraging for the office market. A major pharmaceuticals firm, PPD, is expecting to build their headquarters on the waterfront. PPD's proposal to locate approximately 1,000 employees is expected to have a positive impact on downtown, generating new demand for the housing and retail markets.

The retail market has been stable in recent years relative to the other sectors. There are approximately 190 downtown retail businesses, including 33 bars or nightclubs. The vacancy rate is estimated at 13% and the average rental rates are \$15 per square foot. Store owners are increasingly concerned about the prolific number of bars and nightclubs downtown and their negative impact on business.

Wilmington attracts approximately 1.6 million visitors per year, primarily to the coastal beaches in the spring and summer months. Yet, the visitation market is largely unrealized downtown with only two business hotels and a handful of bed and breakfast inns. Business travelers are estimated to account for only 12% of the downtown visitation.

## Land Use

### ZONING

The downtown area is predominantly zoned as the Central Business District (CBD), though the northwestern portion of the area is zoned as Light Manufacturing. The Zoning Ordinance recognizes that the development of the CBD will be guided by the City of Wilmington Downtown Plan: Vision 2020. The Zoning Ordinance has adopted 17 supplemental regulations recommended by the Vision 2020 Plan, to be applied to areas within the CBD area but excluding those areas overlapping with the Historic District. The supplemental regulations cover a wide range of issues including building orientation and massing, height relationships, facades and street walls, parking and access, streetscape and landscaping and residential density. The Vision 2020 Plan also recommends rezoning the Light Manufacturing District north-west of downtown as the CBD zone.

### SUB AREAS

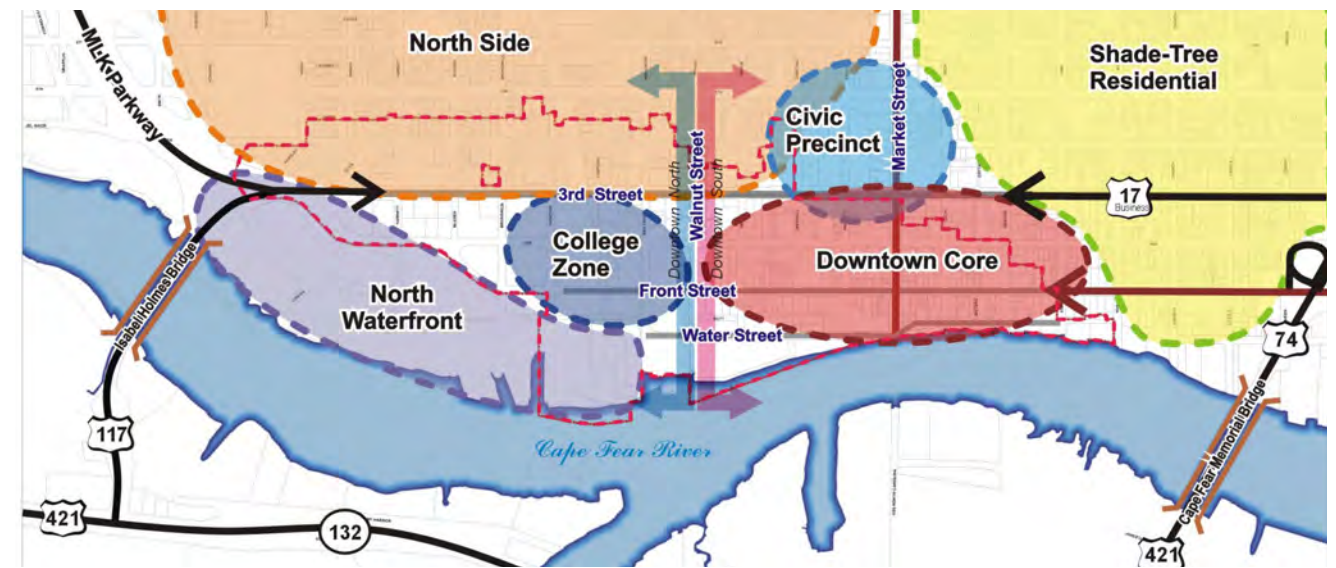
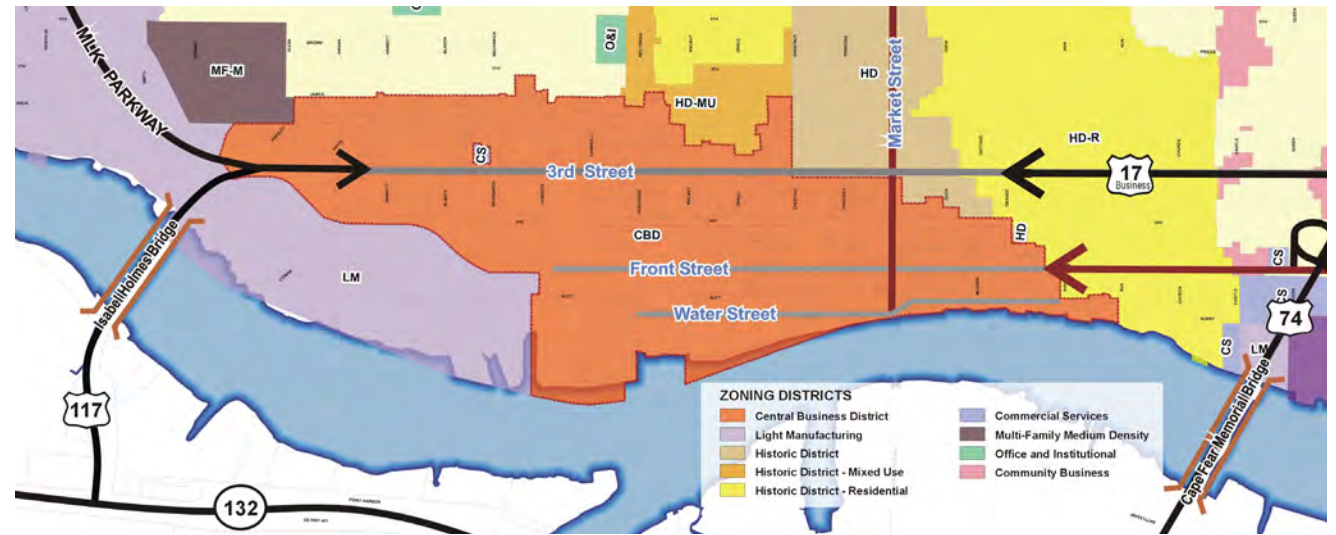
Downtown Wilmington can be characterized as a divided downtown, with the historic downtown core separated from the underutilized downtown north area by Walnut Street. Within and adjacent to downtown, there are six distinct sub-areas based on land use and the physical characteristics of buildings and street. The downtown core, the civic precinct, and the shade tree residential area are located to the south of Walnut Street; the north waterfront area, the college zone, and the NorthSide community are located to the north of Walnut Street. Some of these sub-areas are identified with official neighborhood names, while others have been designated for the purposes of this plan, which primarily addresses the downtown core and the north waterfront area, although

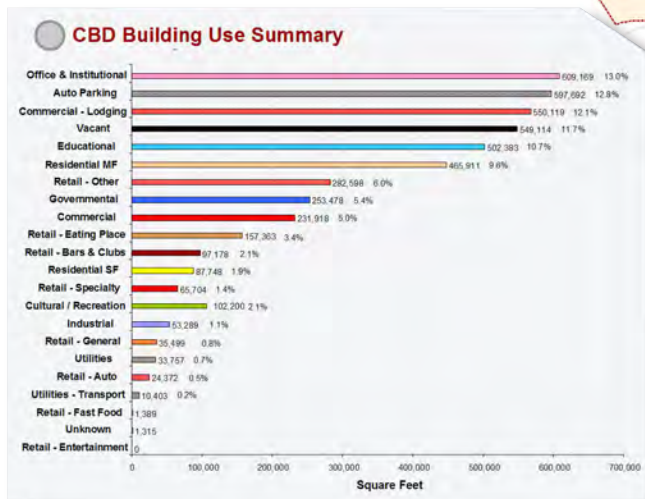
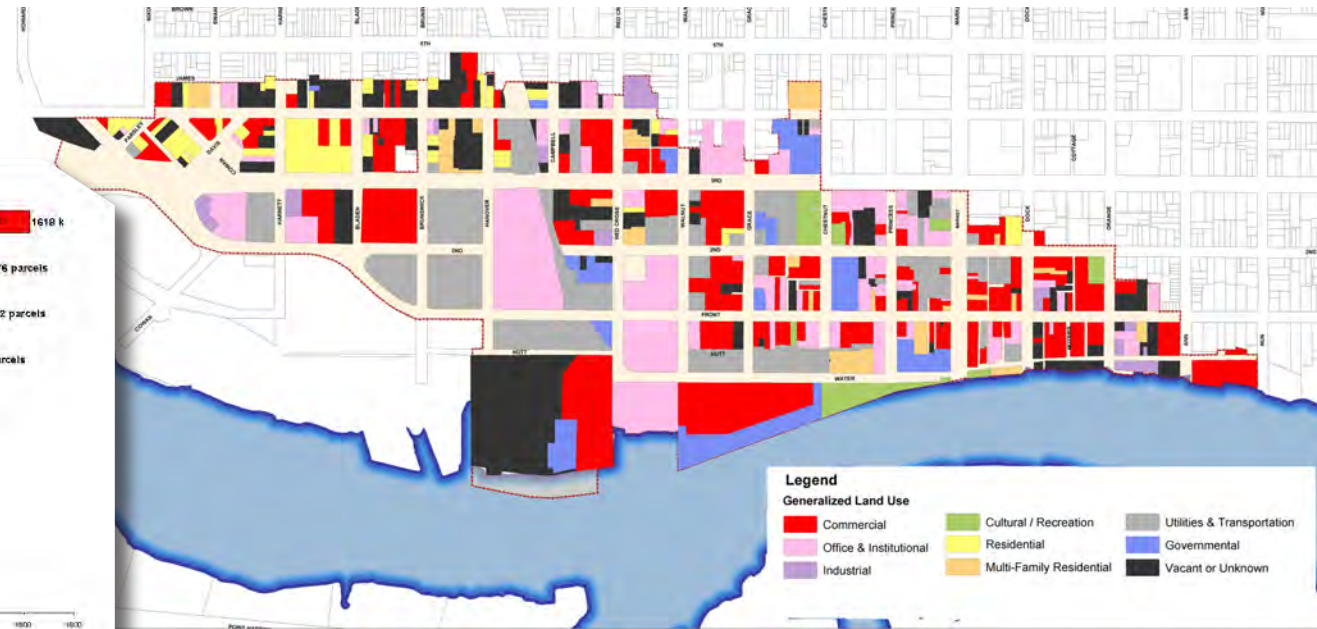
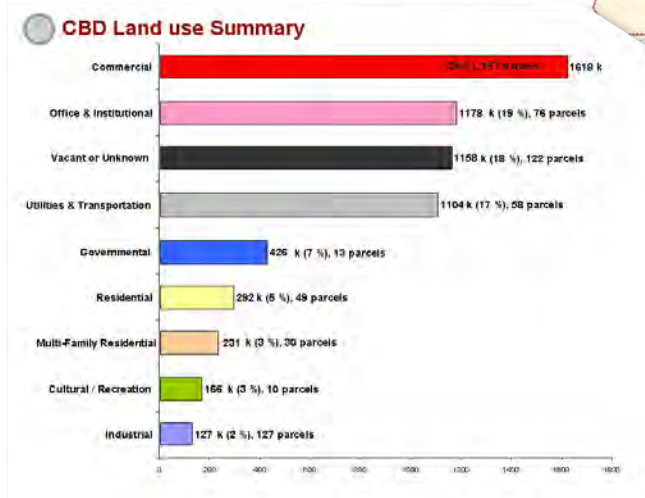
relationships with adjacent areas are considered. The downtown core is characterized by a largely historic building stock used for mostly commercial retail and office purposes. The largest downtown hotel is also located in this area. Selective infill development sites are available in the downtown core. Several buildings have multiple uses, either with commercial office or residential uses on the upper floors. Residential uses are mostly multi-family and account for 4 percent of the uses in this area.

The adjacent civic precinct, which is located east of 3rd Street, consists of government and arts uses, including the City government offices, the county courthouse, Thalian Hall, and the city library. The shade tree residential area is a neighborhood to the south and east of downtown, consisting of large historic single-family homes on streets with mature trees.

The portion of downtown located north of Walnut Street includes the north waterfront area and the college zone. It is characterized by industrial uses and underutilized land, including the Almont Shipping site, the Dean Hardwoods site, the urban setting for Cape Fear Community College, vast surface parking lots, and vacant land parcels. One of downtown's two hotels is also located in this area. Much of this area, particularly the north waterfront, is suitable for new development.

The adjacent NorthSide community is the northern gateway to Wilmington's historic downtown. The NorthSide area consists primarily of modest single-family homes and the Robert Taylor Homes site, as well as the North 4th Street community retail corridor. The NorthSide area is currently implementing a revitalization plan.





**AREA DISTRIBUTION**

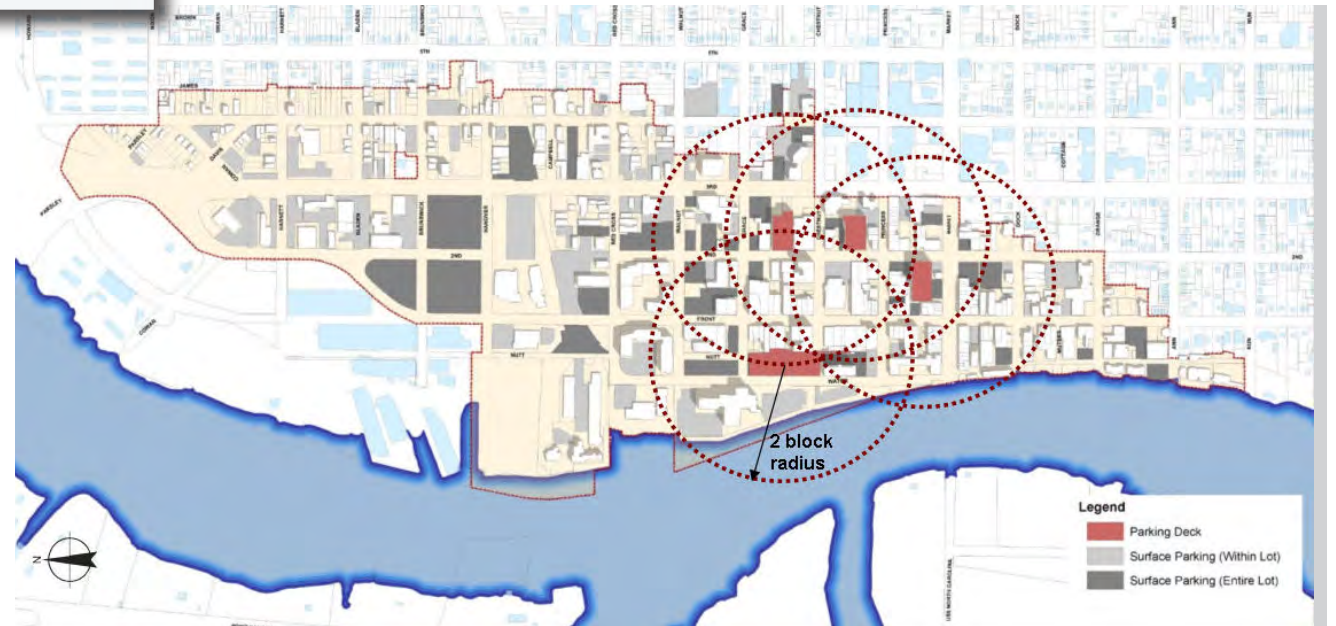
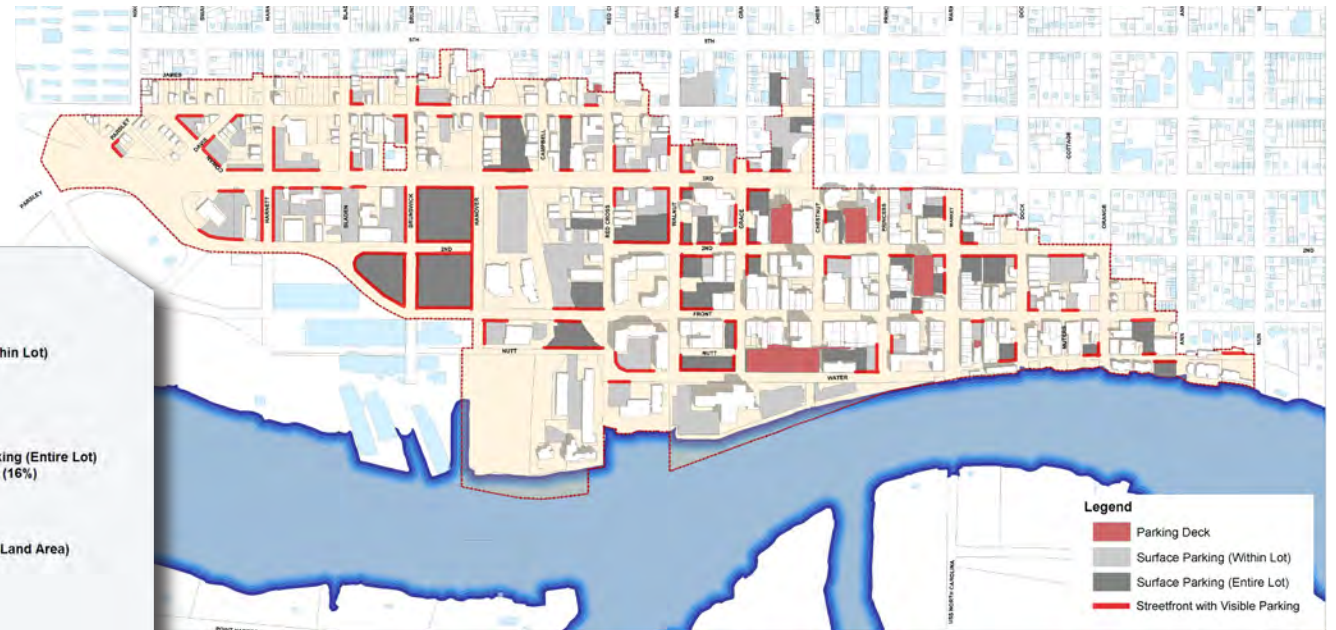
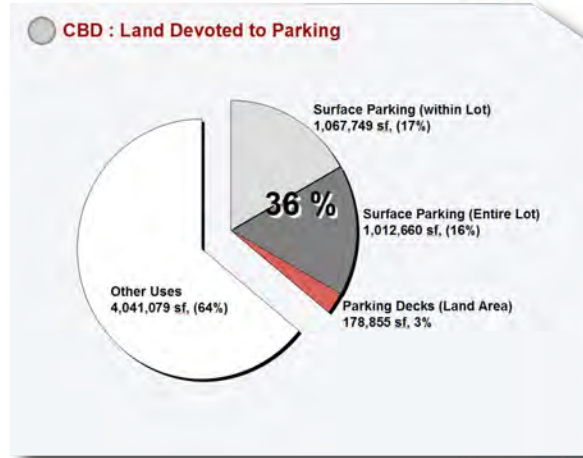
The CBD area covers 210 acres of land area and includes 538 parcels. The major land uses within the CBD are commercial (26%), office and institutional (19%), vacant (18%) and governmental (7%). The CBD Land Use Summary graph indicates the land use distribution.

The CBD has approximately 4 million square feet of built space distributed in 390 buildings. Floor space by buildings is summarized in the CBD Building Summary graph. Office and governmental space use accounts for nearly 860,000 SF, Commercial Retail for 640,000 SF and Education 500,000 SF while approximately 550,000 SF of space is vacant and nearly 600,000 SF is devoted to parking decks within the CBD. As evident from the building use map, the downtown core has a vibrant mix of uses, especially along Front Street. Areas north of Walnut Street are more sparse, leading to a perception of an 'incomplete downtown'. Also noticeable is the lack of entertainment uses (movie theaters, galleries, etc.) and the low proportion of retail square footage within the CBD core. For example, the downtown core does not have a grocery store, full-service drug store, pre-school or child care center, health club, or video store.

**PARKING**

There is an overabundance of surface parking downtown. Over 36 percent of the CBD consists of surface parking (approximately 2 million square feet of land area), and 33 percent of all street frontage downtown consists of surface parking lots.

Four parking decks are located in the downtown historic core, three of which have been constructed since 1997, when the first Vision 2020 Plan was completed. The oldest of the four decks, the Water Street parking deck, located between Grace and Chestnut Streets, is proposed for replacement. The three other parking structures provide approximately 1,570 sheltered spaces. Despite the abundance of available parking



A new parking garage on 2nd Street (shown here under construction in a view from Market Street) opened in Summer 2004.



Developable lots and vacant buildings create an unattractive streetscape.

## Development Opportunities

Several opportunities for both new and infill development exist downtown. Since the downtown core area is relatively developed, redevelopment would consist primarily of the infill development of smaller parcels. These include sites at 2nd and Dock Streets, 2nd and Orange Streets, Water and Princess Streets, and Water and Orange Streets. Two land parcels located along Water Street are used as surface and deck parking. The surface parking lot located behind the Cotton Exchange complex is underutilized

as a land parcel proximate to the water's edge, and should be redeveloped to a higher and better use. The Water Street parking deck is incompatible with the historic core, and should also be redeveloped to a higher and better use.

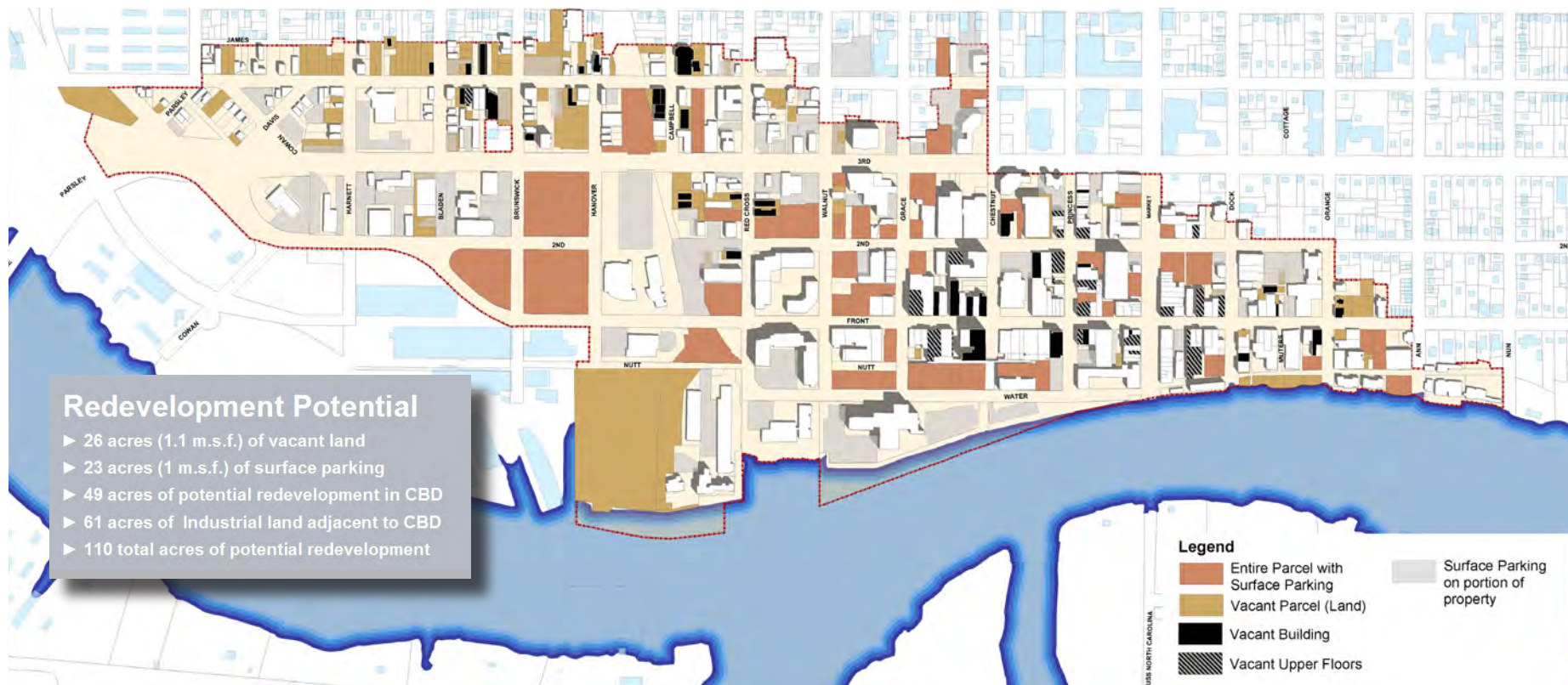
Larger development sites are located north of Walnut Street, in the north waterfront area. A few of these open parcels are owned by the Cape Fear Community College (CFCC) and are presently used as surface parking lots for students and faculty. Other parcels in the north waterfront area

are currently used for industrial activities that are incompatible with the future vision of downtown and will not be the highest and best uses.

The CFCC land parcels currently used for surface parking are located north of Red Cross Street. Most CFCC users live outside the downtown core and therefore require daily parking to attend class. While demand for student and faculty parking is expected to remain high in the future, surface parking will not always be the highest and best use for this land. As downtown land values continue to rise, and demand for living and working downtown grows, it will eventually make more economic sense for CFCC to consolidate its student and faculty parking onto fewer land parcels in the form of structured parking. The sale of remaining parcels could help subsidize the construction of parking decks and other program needs.

Almont Shipping's industrial uses located in the north waterfront area are not the highest and best use for a growing waterfront downtown that is envisioned as the region's premier place for living, working and playing. Almont's recent sale of several parcels to PPD is an indicator of the increased demand for urban waterfront property.

Other potential development sites in the downtown north area include the parcels west of Nutt Street at Hanover and Harnett Streets, and a site at 3rd and Campbell Streets.



## Urban Design

The historic scale, massing, and architectural detail characterizing most of the downtown building stock contribute to a charming, pedestrian-friendly setting in much of the downtown core. Streetscapes with particularly strong character include: Front Street between Orange and Walnut Streets, Market Street west of 2nd Street, and a section of Princess Street near 2nd Street. Other streets have great potential but currently do not provide a high-quality pedestrian experience, either due to vacant land parcels that interrupt the streetscape or because of poor architectural quality.

Despite scattered visual attributes, the overall visual perception of downtown is weakened because the quality of the visual environment is inconsistent. Most downtown streets lack trees, street furniture, and flowers. Several east-west streets either terminate abruptly with structures that block river views, or include vistas of unsightly parking lots. The overabundance of surface parking lots, especially along street frontages, creates unattractive voids in the streetscape. This creates a negative impression that challenges the more positive feelings associated with the downtown core.

Nondescript buildings constructed without high-quality materials and lacking in architectural detail are insensitive to Wilmington's rich architectural past, counter to a dynamic and livable urban community, and create a negative sense of place. Some of the more recent buildings, such as the Hilton Hotel, are incompatible

with the historic core, monotonous in design, and create an unwelcoming pedestrian experience. The lack of a design review process for areas outside of the downtown historic district further contributes to mediocre development.

Older buildings with architectural significance located outside of protected historic districts are vulnerable to undesirable alterations that could leave an indelible mark on both the structure and the streetscape. The potential loss of craft or irreplaceable materials from a bygone era would have a serious impact on the urban fabric. Therefore, local historic district designation of structures in the other appropriate portions of downtown could help prevent future destruction.

The potential gateway entrances into downtown currently lack identifiable features to convey a sense of arrival. While Market Street is an elegant approach from the east (beginning at 16th Street), the entry transitions at either river bridge are weak because industrial uses are the first impression. The new entry offered by Martin Luther King Memorial Parkway at 3rd Street corridor also does not currently offer an entry character suitable for announcing downtown.

Overall, due to the incomplete nature of the urban fabric, limited views of the River, excessive and highly visible parking areas, poorly designed newer buildings, a lack of street furnishings, and weak gateway features, the lasting visual perception of downtown and the resulting urban experience is moderate.



Some streets do not reflect the unique character that helps define Wilmington.



Improving the quality of design, including greater architectural detail and a more open street edge, will strengthen the urban fabric of downtown.



Waterfront open space is needed so that the construction of new buildings over the river's edge won't crowd the waterfront.



Well-designed signage contributes to the overall pedestrian experience.



This urban design analysis identifies key street corridors with river vistas (depicted with red arrows), landmark buildings (noted in red), historic districts (outlined in red), shade-tree neighborhoods and parks (depicted in green), and a desirable streetwall created by primarily historic buildings (identified in black).

**BUILDING DENSITY**

The density of a city is determined by the scale of its buildings, as measured by height and mass, and the relative closeness of its buildings to each other in terms of setbacks and street widths. Building density can significantly affect the look and feel of a city.

Tall, massive buildings (typically with 17 floors or more) can negatively affect the visual environment of a city if they block important views or special features, or if they overwhelm historic low-scale buildings and lack design sensitivity to setbacks, materials and architectural details.

Existing building heights in downtown Wilmington range between 12 and 108 feet; however, the majority of buildings in the historic core are three to four stories high and few

buildings are more than 8 floors. As a result, downtown Wilmington has a pedestrian scale.

Some of the tallest buildings in downtown Wilmington are among the most attractive, with well-designed proportions, interesting features, and articulated details. A greater problem than height is the newer, medium-scaled buildings that lack architectural quality or contextual sensitivity, including inappropriate materials, weak fenestration, or blank walls at the street level. In addition, a few of the newer buildings on South Water Street are located adjacent to the river and in some cases create a crowded condition along the waterfront. This condition is exacerbated when a building obstructs River vistas from public street corridors.



Poor connections confuse the pedestrian and effectively create a barrier between the waterfront and the rest of downtown.



Well-designed buildings help to create a strong sense of place.



Architectural detail at ground level heightens the pedestrian's experience.

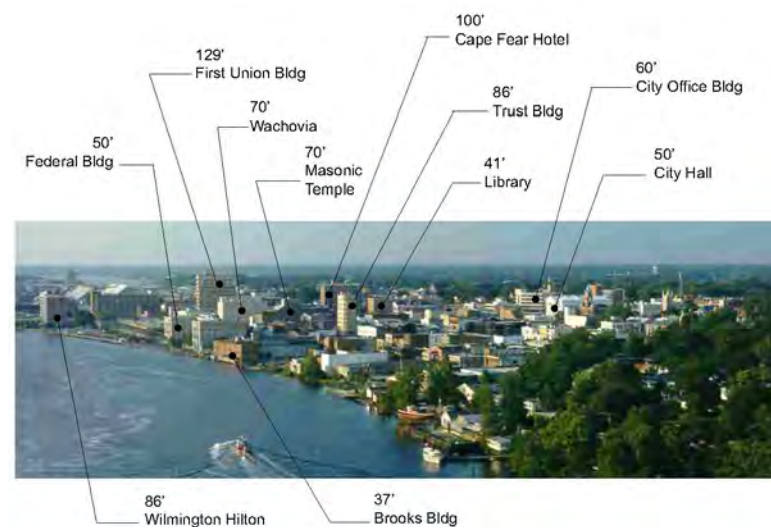


Several buildings designed as 10 or more stories punctuate the Wilmington skyline.



Buildings with blank walls and weak fenestration (window or doorway openings) are greater threat to the urban fabric than tall buildings.





Illustrations of downtown building heights color-coded by use (top) and annotated by building name (below).



Existing building heights and topography, with the tallest buildings and highest elevations indicated in brown.

## Open Space

Parks, trails, and scenic open space can help beautify an area, provide a means for leisure, recreation or entertainment, and create a positive identity. Open space is a defining element in a successful city plan. Well-designed parks and open spaces for public use and enjoyment have tangible benefits, often stimulating other uses and increasing the value of an area. Trails can be used to link downtown to other desirable locations such as the beach or other natural areas. People who use open space trails enjoy documented health benefits and are frequently enticed to spend money at other nearby locations.

There are few parks located downtown. Riverfront Park, located along Water Street, is a medium-sized open space with seating areas and a view to the river. The segment of Water Street at this location helps create a larger space for events. This park has potential for expansion to accommodate a wider variety of uses.

A second park is Bijou Park, a small pocket park located off Front Street between Grace and Chestnut Streets with challenging access to Water Street by way of the Water Street Parking Deck.

The Riverwalk is a welcomed first step in helping people gain access to the waterfront. Envisioned as a continuous public right-of-way between the Holmes and Memorial Bridges that is punctuated by a series of pocket parks, construction of the Riverwalk is only partially complete. Recent banner and lighting additions to the Riverwalk enhance this right-of-way as a place for public use and enjoyment. The construction of the Riverwalk has already enticed more local residents to visit downtown.

While the Riverwalk provides an opportunity to reclaim the waterfront as a public amenity, and thereby serve as a stimulus for economic development and tourism, in many places it is narrow (8' wide) and not connected to

Water Street. Furthermore, in several places, new development is crowding the River. As a result, expansive open space along the waterfront is lacking—there are no large usable green parks adjacent to the River and the pocket parks are inadequate for public recreation. In addition, the pocket parks do not maximize their potential as places for interpretative education on local history or ecology or artistic expression. Thus, while the Cape Fear River is the foundation for Wilmington's identity, it has not yet been fully realized as an open space amenity.

The River to the Sea Bikeway provides bicycle access from Market and Water Streets at the Cape Fear River to North Lumina Avenue at Wrightsville Beach. However, it is not grade-separated from the highway and, therefore, not enjoyable for joggers, skaters, or pedestrians. There are also no bicycle rental services located at each end of the bikeway.



The Riverwalk is intended to provide continuous access to the waterfront.



The existing Riverfront Park consists of approximately 2 acres of hardscape on Water Street between Market and Chestnut Streets.



Bijou Park consists of nearly 0.1 acres located on the 300 block of North Front street.

## Historic Preservation

Historic preservation has been a priority for the City since the 1960s when it first established an Architectural Review Board (now the Historic Preservation Commission or HPC). During the 1970s, the Downtown Area Revitalization Effort (DARE, now known as Wilmington Downtown, Inc.) initiated several adaptive reuse projects that helped sustain the urban core after the relocation of the railroad, including the renovation of the Cotton Exchange and Chandlers Wharf. Since that initial revitalization effort, several historic surveys have been conducted as a prelude for the establishment of local and national historic districts. There are currently three local historic districts and one National Register district located in the core of downtown (additional local

districts are located immediately east of downtown). The downtown districts and their zoning designations include:

- Wilmington National Register Historic District
- Downtown Commercial Historic District Overlay (HD-O)
- Theatre Historic District (HD)
- Residential Historic District (HD-R)

### DESIGN REVIEW

Design review is mandatory in the City's three local historic districts. Projects involving new construction, demolition, relocation, or exterior changes to existing buildings and surrounding

grounds must be reviewed and approved by the HPC. The Planning Division assists applicants with design consultation and makes recommendations to the HPC. The City has published design guidelines (updated in 1999) that are intended to provide clear guidance to applicants. Initial appeals of HPC decisions may be made to the City's Board of Adjustment within 10 days of the HPC's decision; subsequent appeals are made to the Superior Court of New Hanover County. Design review by the HPC is not required for projects located outside of the three local historic districts. The State Historic preservation Office (SHPO) reviews federal projects located within the National Register Historic District.



## Perspectives on Design Review

### BACKGROUND

Design review in the United States occurs for both historic and non-historic properties. In historic districts, design review is usually administered by local historic preservation or planning staff who make recommendations to a Historic Preservation Review Board or Landmarks Commission for full approval. Local historic preservation groups or committees often coordinate with local government staff as part of this process. The legal basis for historic district review has been firmly established in case law. The Secretary of Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation and supplementary guidelines further define principles and criteria for evaluating projects.

Design review outside historic district or landmark review usually follows process similar to design review that is attached to historic preservation, with the final review body being the Planning Commission. The difference is that while historic preservation is always related to the public policy goal of preserving and protecting historic buildings, design review for non-historic purposes is related to aesthetics or revitalization in the general welfare and interest of the public. It is up to individual localities to determine if they should create design guidelines

### TYPES OF DESIGN REVIEW

Design review for aesthetic control can be implemented in three ways: 1) as a condition of ownership, 2) as a condition of public action, or 3) as a general requirement. Each method could be applied to the City of Wilmington.

When design review is administered as a condition of ownership, one entity wishing to sell property to another entity can attach certain conditions as part of the real property transaction, including design review. This method is used when a public entity sells property to a private entity for redevelopment. It is also used by private communities wishing to maintain certain design standards. Thus, if certain buildings were to be condemned in Wilmington for sale to a private developer, the City could create a design review process as part of that process.

When design review is administered as a condition of public action, a property owner applying for a special review or exception (i.e., when a project is categorized as not by-right development), such as a variance from zoning or planned unit development, such an application triggers design review. The City could alter its zoning ordinance to require design review in specific instances. Projects requiring discretionary approval, as well as any city action or subsidy, should be reviewed by the Urban Design Review Board. The City could also create a local grant program to provide financial incentives to owners who adhere to design review guidelines.

When design review is administered as a general requirement, it is governed by an overarching "police power" of the state, which then delegates that power to the local authority. In this type of design review, in particular, it is important to define clear and objective design review criteria to avoid inconsistent rulings. This will help sustain decisions made on behalf

of the public's welfare should there be a legal challenge.

### APPROACHES TO DESIGN REVIEW

The approach to design review can range from self-administering to discretionary. In selecting an urban design review model for the City of Wilmington, the City should consider certain factors relative to the unique characteristics of the City's social, economic and political environment. Factors include the number of resources available within government to support review, the education and expertise of potential board members, and the level of political acceptance for instituting design review.

A fully self-administering design review process would include the use of detailed guidelines to explain criteria by which the review authority would judge the project. This approach is typical when there is low political support and limited resources available to support the design review process. A fully discretionary design review process would give full power and authority to the design review body. This approach is typical when there is high political support and high resources available to support the design review process.

## 3.0

## Downtown Framework: Setting the Stage

The physical conditions of a downtown greatly affect the urban characteristics of a city. Based on the synthesis of alternative scenarios, the Downtown Plan establishes a framework for the comprehensive range of recommendations provided in Chapter 4.

*The best way to predict  
the future is to invent it.*



## Summary of Issues

The analysis of the current physical, socio-economic, governmental, and programmatic conditions of downtown Wilmington, in conjunction with the extensive input of interested stakeholders, reveal several key issues for this downtown Plan. These include:

### QUALITY OF LIFE PERCEPTIONS

Downtown is perceived by some residents and property owners as unattractive, uninviting, and unsafe, primarily due to the prevalence of bars and nightclubs. These concerns are exacerbated by a perceived lack of regulatory enforcement relating to the supervision of alcoholic beverages, unruly behavior, disruptive noise, and the cleanup of trash and debris.

### POOR ORIENTATION TO THE RIVER

The Cape Fear River is downtown's single greatest asset, but it is not the central focus of downtown. In addition, portions of the waterfront are crowded, open space along the River is limited and east-west public connections to the River are weak.

### AN INCOMPLETE DOWNTOWN

Downtown Wilmington has a charming pedestrian character and many positive features and attractions. But the development pattern of the downtown core has too many gaps of vacant parcels and empty buildings that diffuse the urban fabric.

### EXCESSIVE SURFACE PARKING

Too much downtown land is used for surface parking, which is an inefficient use of urban resources, an unsightly interruption to the downtown experience, and an indication of an underperforming real estate market.

### NOT ENOUGH DOWNTOWN HOUSING

There are not yet enough residents in the downtown core to make it a viable community. There is insufficient market demand for a full-service drug store, hardware store, or especially a grocery store.

### MISSING OPEN SPACES

The lack of downtown parks and open space amenities has a critical impact on the urban environment. Without inviting recreation opportunities or public gathering places, the reasons for visiting or staying downtown are reduced for both local residents and tourists.

### LACK OF INVESTMENT AND FUNDING

The private sector and the City are not investing the full resources necessary to enhance downtown. Private-sector development activity, public improvements, and a commitment to funding necessary changes are not apparent.

### REGULATORY CHALLENGES

There are frequently adverse relationships between the City, local residents, and the private-sector development community in Wilmington. A city is best served when the regulatory environment includes appropriate incentives as well as punitive requirements, there is a clear understanding of performance expectations, and stakeholders work together for mutual benefit.

### URBAN DESIGN THREATS

With a growing market for new downtown development, potential threats to the urban fabric will increase. Investors will desire higher-density buildings to offset land costs and citizens will fight for historic preservation to maintain a lower-density character and high-quality architecture.

### FEW YOUNG ADULTS

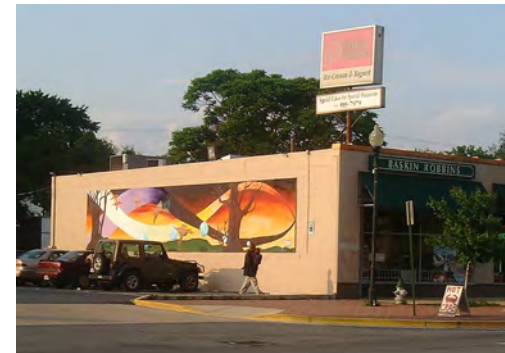
Despite local educational opportunities and a good quality of life, Wilmington is exporting its bright and talented youth to other metropolitan areas. This "brain drain" of young adults moving elsewhere to live and start families occurs because there are not enough quality jobs and there is a lack of entertainment uses and family activities in Wilmington.



The key to a vibrant downtown is people.



A mix of uses creates 18 to 24-hour street vitality.



This mural helps enliven the street by defining an otherwise blank wall.



Public art like these sculptures on exhibit

## Alternative Scenarios

Three alternative scenarios were developed and presented to Wilmington citizens and stakeholders to facilitate a dialogue on the future of downtown. Each alternative had a slightly different land use emphasis and was oriented toward a slightly different market:

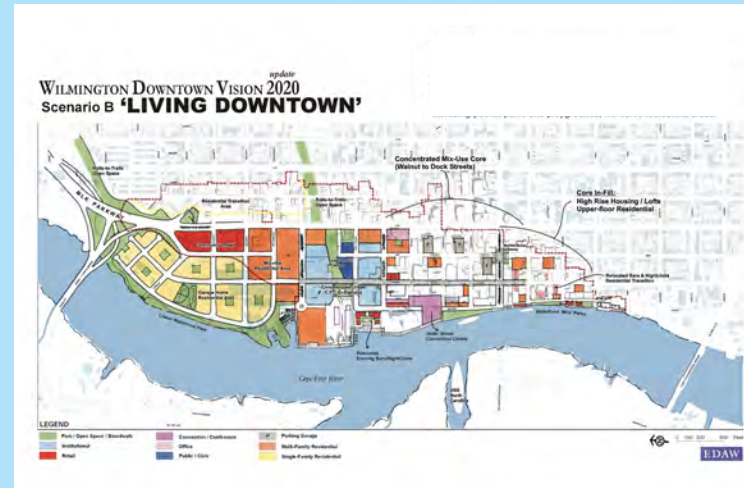
By providing options, the preferred elements were identified and prioritized. The resulting choices helped create an initial draft version of the Plan.



### Destination Downtown

To attract visitors and tourists from across the state and throughout the country with new major attractions and entertainment retail uses.

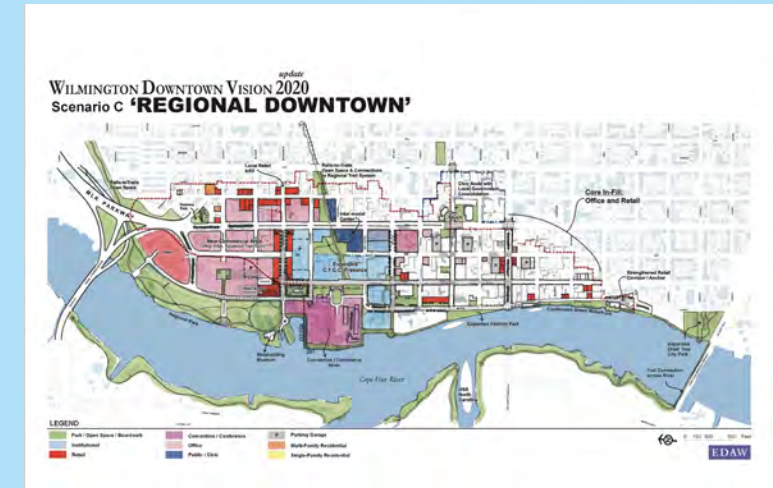
The intent is to use bold new facilities and promotions to make Wilmington's downtown synonymous with family-friendly festivals, cultural events, specialized shopping, and outdoor waterfront activities.



### Living Downtown

To attract an expanded market of new residents, especially artists, young professionals and "empty nesters."

The intent is to transform Wilmington's downtown into a desirable urban neighborhood with multiple housing types, community amenities, and a relocated nightlife district. Activities would be located at key points along the shoreline encouraging residents to use and interact with the riverfront. Public open spaces, including pocket parks and playgrounds, would serve residential areas.



### Regional Downtown

To attract local workers and shoppers from greater Wilmington on a regular basis with a traditional mix of commercial uses and regional amenities.

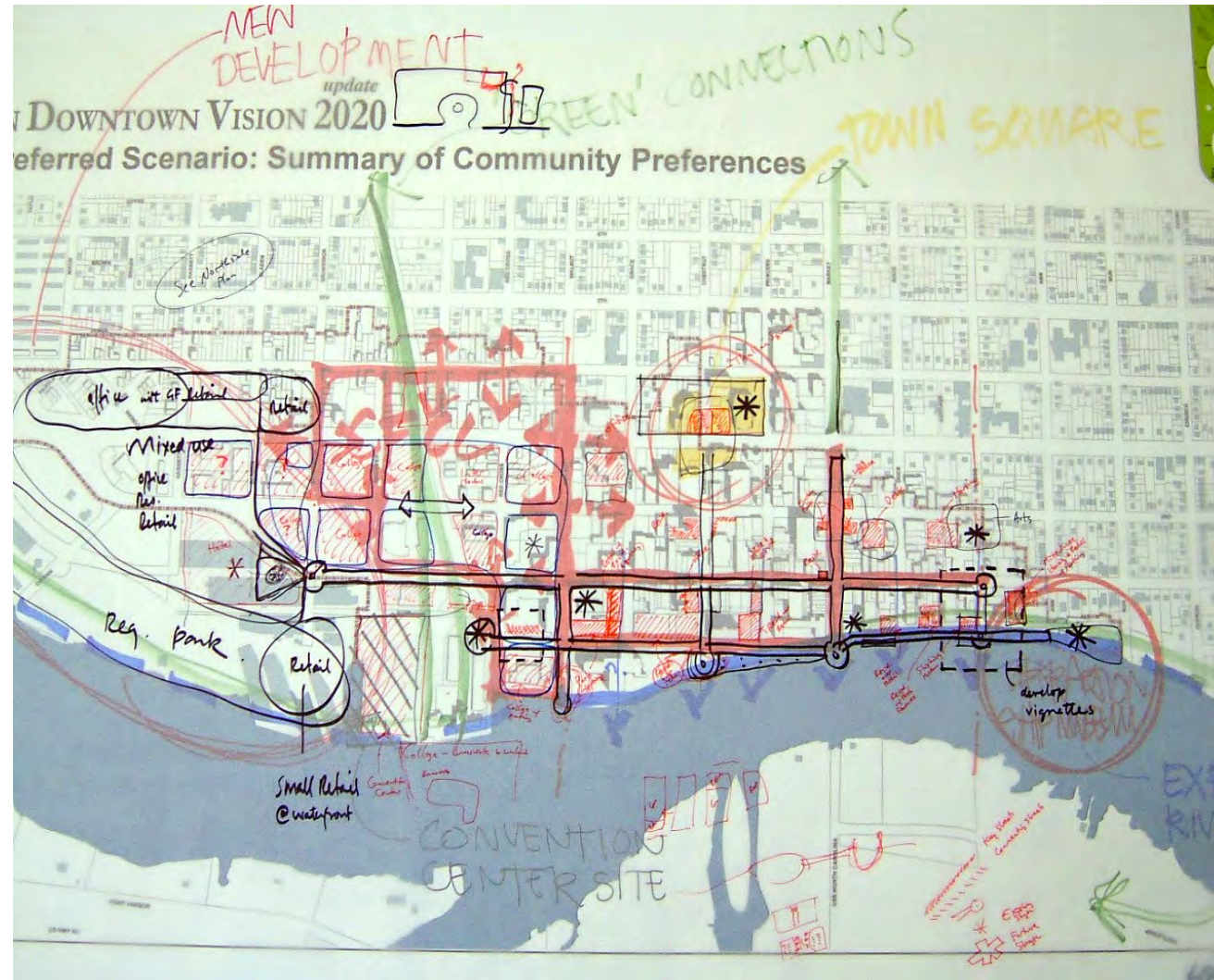
The intent is to make Wilmington's downtown the center of employment in the business and local government sectors, as well as a popular location for retail and family recreation activities for residents of New Hanover County. Cape Fear Community College would be strengthened as a regional commuter draw adjacent to downtown.

## Community Preferences

During the alternatives workshop, after full consideration of the three alternatives, the community's preferences were summarized into a Preferred Scenario. The Preferred Scenario synthesized several ideas from each of the three scenarios and served as a framework for developing the Wilmington Downtown Plan.

Based on public input, three primary ideas were incorporated into this Preferred Scenario:

1. provide more usable open space along the waterfront;
2. encourage more mixed-use residential and commercial uses, and include more cultural attractions; and
3. address a variety of current issues, including bars/nightclubs, the proposed convention center, and the quality of urban design.



Working diagram sketch developed with public interaction and feedback during community workshops.



## The Waterfront Downtown Plan

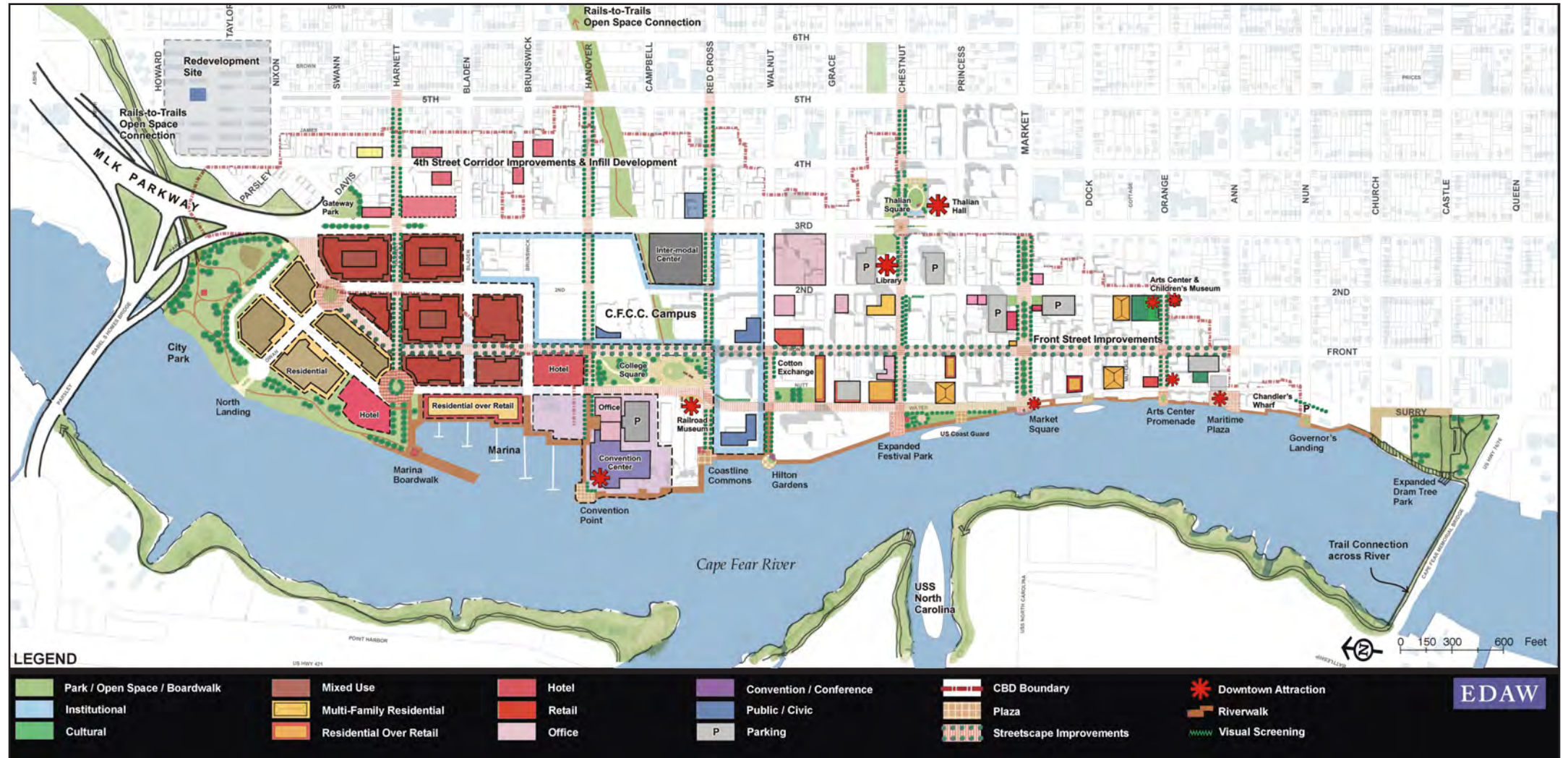
The Wilmington Downtown Vision 2020 Plan includes the following recommendations for physical elements:

- Increase the amount of open space downtown, especially at the waterfront, for parks varying in both size and uses (expanding Dram Tree Park, Festival park, and other smaller open spaces).

- Complete north-south Riverwalk connections along waterfront.
- Preserve east-west street corridor views to the River.
- Infill vacant land and parking lots with parks and residential and mixed-use development.
- Complete streetscape improvements along Front, Water, Chestnut, and Market Streets.

- Create a civic square at Thalian Hall.
- Expand Cape Fear Community College around a College Square park.
- Encourage a new mixed-use commercial area in the north waterfront area with a large regional park at Holmes Bridge.
- Create an Arts Promenade along Orange Street.

- Facilitate a new Maritime Museum and re-invent the existing Railroad Museum.
- Convert rails-to-trails open space along the former railroad corridor without precluding a multi-modal facility.
- Enhance a new green edge along the west side of the River to enhance pedestrian and bicyclist activity.



## Measuring Progress

The success of the Waterfront Downtown plan can be measured by comparing progress toward quantifiable benchmark targets. Identified benchmark goals would thus serve as specific milestones for key downtown population growth and economic development data. Recommended benchmarks for 2020 (and 2010) include:

Component	Action	2020 Target
Downtown Population	Increase	3,000 new residents (1,000 by 2010)
Downtown Housing	Increase	1,500 new dwelling units (500 by 2010)
Downtown Employment	Increase	10,000 new jobs (5,000 by 2010)
Downtown Office Vacancy	Reduce	10% or less (12% by 2010)
Downtown Visitation	Increase	250,000 new visitors annually (100,000 by 2010)
Downtown Hospitality	Increase	200% more hotel rooms (100% by 2010)
Downtown Property	Increase	90% parcel utilization (75% by 2010)



## 4.0

## Recommended Actions: Implementing the Vision

### Waterfront Downtown:

#### Overall Objectives & Strategies

##### I. Celebrate the Waterfront

1. Activate the Water's Edge
2. Connect People to the River
3. Promote Attributes and Events

##### II. Complete the Historic Core

4. Partner with Stakeholders
5. Contribute Public Resources
6. Develop Key Infill Sites

##### III. Sustain the Momentum

7. Address Quality of Life Concerns
8. Improve the Regulatory Environment
9. Strengthen Downtown Organizations
10. Engage and Expand the Community

Wilmington is a treasure trove—it's beautiful, it's authentic, it's convenient to the beaches and many other attractions—but, it has some missing pieces...

— quotation from a stakeholder during the planning process

This plan is designed to fill in those downtown holes by capitalizing on and strengthening Wilmington's many assets and demanding excellence in public and private actions. The measures for implementing the Vision 2020 Plan are organized around three central and critical *big ideas*: celebrating the waterfront, completing the historic core, and continuing recent progress. The comprehensive recommendations to achieve these central objectives are focused on both long-term solutions and immediate results.

Implementation strategies were developed in response to citizen concerns documented during the planning process. A list of action items has been further detailed in support of each strategy. First Actions are the top priority items and are

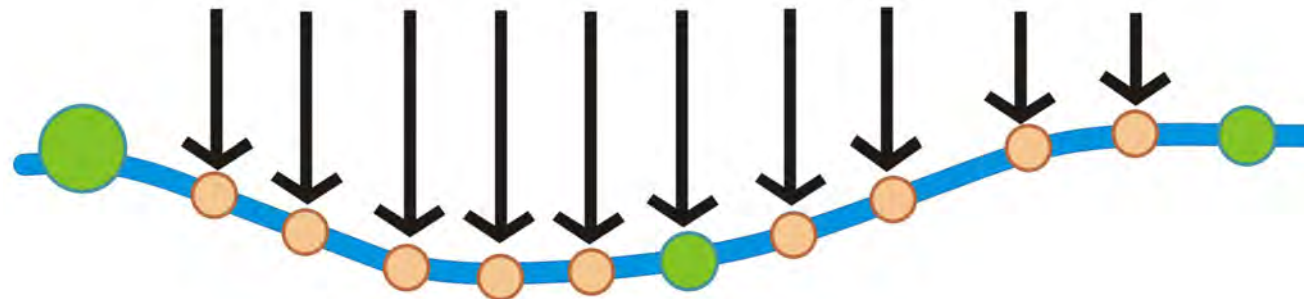
emphasized with implementation steps to ensure immediate and visible results. The intent is tangible progress that will help catalyze development and continue the growing interest in living and working in downtown Wilmington.

Some actions are physical improvements, while others depend simply on a change of attitude. All actions, however, will require a partnership approach for success. This includes formal public-private partnerships for specific development projects, informal partnering between the City and the private sector, and substantial collaboration between City agencies, residents, businesses and organizations who want to raise Wilmington's stature as a livable and economically vital city.

*The concept of "good enough" keeps more cities from becoming great.*

## I. Celebrate The Waterfront

Reclaim the Cape Fear River by reconnecting people with the wonders of the waterfront and providing new and enhanced opportunities for holding public events, drawing inspiration from the unique strengths that define Wilmington—its history, culture, and ecology.



Downtown Wilmington should be oriented towards and connected with its waterfront.

## Waterfront Parks

1. City Park
2. North Landing
3. Marina Boardwalk
4. Convention Point
5. Coastline Commons
6. Hilton Gardens
7. Festival Park
8. Market Square
9. Arts Promenade
10. Maritime Plaza
11. Governor's Landing
12. Dram Tree Park



Wilmington's waterfront should be a linear ribbon of green space accented by a series of parks, plazas and open spaces.

## Strategy 1: Activate the Water's Edge by creating attractive destinations along Riverwalk.

### First Action:

**A Develop and expand a series of waterfront parks with public art and interpretive exhibits along Riverwalk.** Throughout the Vision 2020 planning process, and consistent with the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, citizens of Wilmington emphasized their interest in reclaiming their waterfront and their desire for having more open space downtown. Refinements to the Riverwalk and additional open space areas and entry points can help activate the waterfront. The Riverwalk should be one long, linear ribbon of green space with existing focal points expanded and developed into 12 distinct parks and open space

areas varying in character, size, and function, including active play areas, comfortable seating, picnic lawns, quiet gardens, civic art, public plazas, performance space, dog parks, etc.

Interpretive parks could be developed around a different cultural or educational theme relating to a former historic period (colonial, shipbuilding, industrial) or the unique ecology of the river. Public art or commemorative works could be used to express such themes in the design of seating, the exhibit of industrial remnants, or interactive sculptures.

While some parks should be designed as smaller passive resting spaces, others, such as Dram Tree City Park or the proposed Regional Park in the north waterfront area, should be designed and programmed as more active spaces for informal recreation and games such as ball-playing, volleyball, soccer, or Frisbee-throwing.

Active parks should include durable play areas for children, and each park should have a unique character that perhaps reflects its surrounding uses. For example, since various family attractions are being developed along Orange Street, then it would be appropriate to activate the terminus of that street with a children's playground that is expressed as a recreational ship.

In addition to providing increased and greatly diversified recreational and decorative opportunities, a series of parks along the waterfront would draw additional residents and visitors to the river. Restaurants, shops, and housing support and benefit from parks and usable open space. Well-designed parks have been proven to stimulate new neighborhoods and serve as catalysts for new investment.

### First Action Implementation Steps:

1. **Complete construction of the Riverwalk.**
2. **Assemble an action-oriented Waterfront Task Force of advocates and stakeholders to guide waterfront plans for the public realm and generate support for funding.**
3. **In conjunction with the Task Force, develop a preliminary budget, project scope, jurisdictional responsibilities, and identify priority parks.**
4. **Prepare a detailed waterfront plan for the Cape Fear River, including design concepts for the 12 identified parks (similar to the plan for Festival Park on the following page), and restrict development that does not contribute to the waterfront.**
5. **Seek and secure funding for the construction of the public parks in order of priority, and solicit-private sponsors for certain park improvements (pieces of art, pavilions, benches, pavers, etc.).**
6. **Install park improvements on an accelerated basis (at least one new park per year).**
7. **Require new private-sector development on the river to provide public open space on their property.**

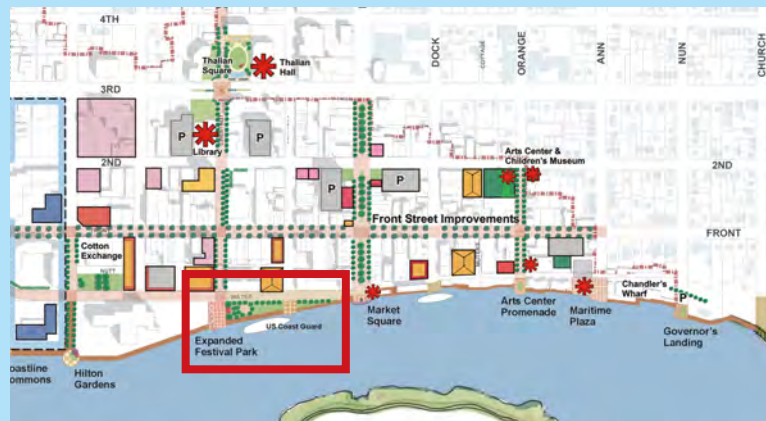
## Festival Park

The best example and highest priority of the 12 recommended waterfront parks is an expanded and improved Festival Park. Extending from Princess Street to Chestnut Street, Festival Park would be centrally located and a vast improvement over the current Riverfront Park, which is limited in size and attractiveness. Festival Park should be a flexible venue for a variety of programmed activities and should include shade trees, inviting green space, limited hardscape areas, a vertical design element (sail sculpture, fountain, etc.), an open pavilion, and special lighting for day and evening events.

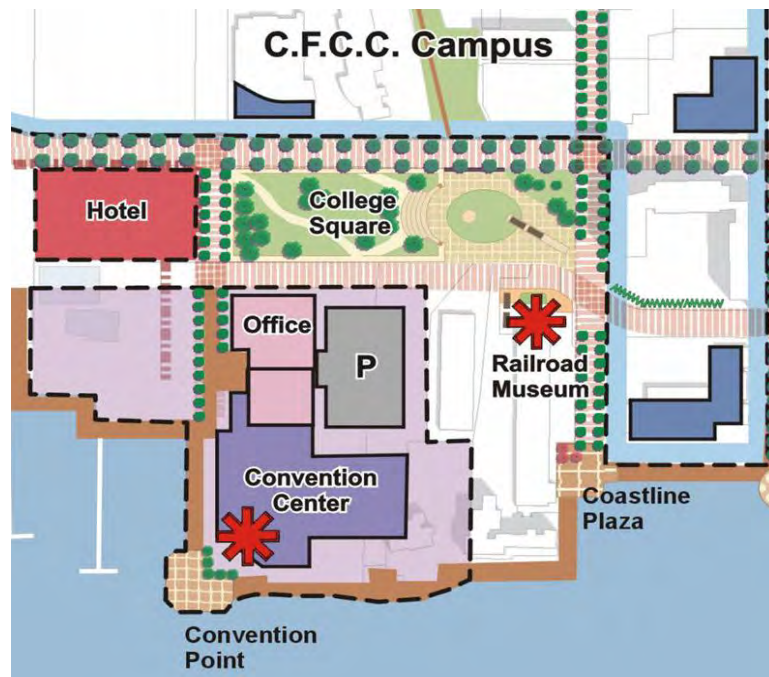
Another example waterfront park is the small area at the foot of Nun Street, which should be extended over the water to connect with the Riverwalk and the adjacent property to the south.



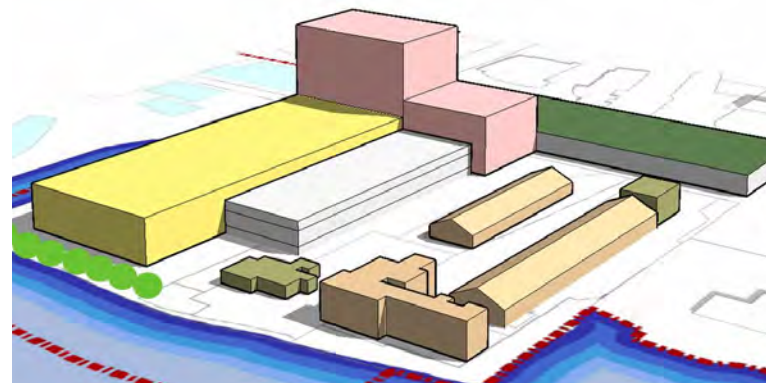
Waterfront parks are an opportunity to develop places for children centered around Wilmington's nautical history.



The existing open space at the terminus of Chestnut and Princess Streets should be expanded and enhanced as a well-designed Festival Park.



The new convention center should be oriented toward the River with open space that is conducive to public gathering.



New buildings and the convention center should step down to and relate to the waterfront.



A public park with an amphitheater would enliven the convention center area, and connect with the adjacent campus of Cape Fear Community College.

**First Action:**

**B Construct the convention center as a new waterfront attraction.** The proposed convention center should be located close to the River and should seek to activate the water's edge by creating adequate space for people to congregate outside along the River. Such space should be open and accessible from other areas along the waterfront. Consistent with the Convention Center Task Force recommendations, the building and adjacent hotel should be designed to take advantage of River views and enhance the relationship between interior and exterior space.

**First Action Implementation Steps:**

1. Collaborate with the convention industry to ensure a well-conceived development plan for the convention center, including supporting hotel and restaurant uses.
2. Utilize the Request for Qualifications/Request for Proposals (RFQ/RFP) process to solicit private-sector involvement in the construction and/or operation of the facility.
3. Construct the convention center with accessible public amenities (green space, outdoor seating, public art, etc.).



Dense shrubbery and small trees placed within a 4- to 6-foot planting strip can screen parked vehicles from view.



Improvements to the portion of Water Street between Market and Red Cross Streets will be critical to the success of the new convention center.



Where space is limited, public amenities associated with new development may need to be placed over the water.

### Additional Recommendations

**C Enhance Water Street as an attractive walking experience.** Inviting walkways and a continuous streetfront experience will strengthen the pedestrian environment and offer opportunities for greater retail spending. To maximize the potential pedestrian activity that will increase with the new convention center, active uses should be encouraged along the sidewalk, including outdoor dining, open space, interactive retail or service uses, and entertaining performers.

Improvements to Water Street should include increased sidewalk widths, shade trees, and benches. Lighting should be attractive and pedestrian-scaled to illuminate walkways, ensure safety, and highlight building elements. Blank walls, extensive parking areas, and other interruptions to the urban fabric should be avoided. The waterfront is too valuable of a public resource to be used for parking; at a minimum, until parking areas are replaced, use landscaping and vegetation to screen parking from view.

**D Require new development to provide public amenities along the waterfront.** New construction along the River should contribute to the public interest of a dynamic waterfront with well-designed and accessible open space and landscaping. In addition, new development should be encouraged to permit public use of restroom facilities.

**E Increase dock space capacity (commercial and recreational).** Dockside activities increase the number of downtown users and enhance the visual interest of the waterfront. Additional permanent and temporary dock space should be located along the waterfront.



## Strategy 2: Connect People to the River by increasing physical and visual access to the waterfront.

### First Action

**A Improve access to the Riverwalk along key pedestrian routes.** There are 15 east-west streets that should be improved with shade trees, streetscape furnishings, and sensitively designed signage directing visitors to the waterfront. Crosswalks on east-west streets should be paved with special materials to reinforce pedestrian direction to the waterfront and create an organized hierarchy in the street pattern.

These east-west streets should terminate with a public space or park that accents and is a clearly defined entry point to the more linear boardwalk. The most important streets for immediate improvement include Market and Chestnut Streets, followed by Orange, Red Cross, and Hanover Streets.

### First Action Implementation Steps:

1. Develop streetscape design concepts for Market and Chestnut Streets.
2. Develop preliminary budget and secure funding for the highest priority streets.
3. Install streetscape improvements on an accelerated basis (one to two east-west streets per year).

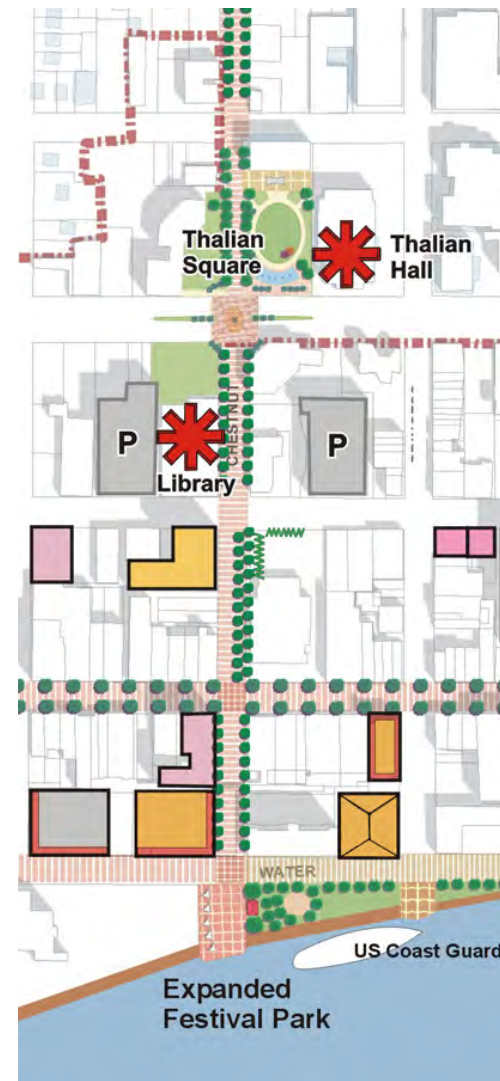
### Additional Recommendations

**B Recapture and protect view corridors to the water along east-west streets.** The Cape Fear River should not be hidden behind structures or obstructions. Downtown users and visitors will be drawn to the River only if they are aware of its presence.

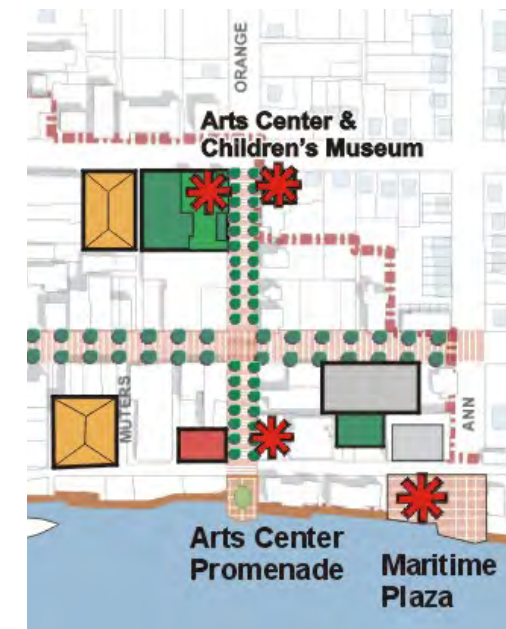
Well designed streets like this one create strong axial relationships to the River and picturesque settings for the pedestrian.



Space located at the waterfront should be maximized for public use and enjoyment.



An enhanced pedestrian spine along Chestnut Street would direct people from Thalian Hall to the waterfront.



An arts promenade along Orange Street would connect the Arts Center with the waterfront.

### Strategy 3: Promote Attributes and Events by advertising the best of the new Wilmington.

**First Action:**

**A Raise the profile of Wilmington and promote downtown to investors and developers through targeted marketing efforts.** To change perceptions and attract a wider market beyond North Carolina, the City of Wilmington must better market its assets.

Marketing efforts have created some of the country’s most cherished institutions, from college bowl games intended to publicize warm-weather destinations, to beauty pageants intended to extend the visitation season, to award ceremonies intended to promote movies and music. In addition to events, many cities are benefitting from promoting themselves as destinations through marketing efforts.

Untapped marketing vehicles include article placement or advertisements in travel or leisure periodicals, airline magazines, out-of-state media (newspapers, radio, and television), and national conferences for travel and meeting planners. A catchy slogan could help promote Wilmington as travel destination (e.g. “The New Jewel of the Atlantic”), or help attract new and returning residents, such as recent graduates of North Carolina’s university system (e.g., “Come Home to Wilmington”).

The City’s achievements and development opportunities should be publicized through trade journals and conferences to regional and national developers. Outside investors with fresh ideas and new product types would help increase the quality of new development.

Large festivals and events should be published in newspapers of cities located more than two or three hours away. Such announcements are an opportunity to advertise new museums and images of the new Riverwalk, as well as other assets such as local architecture, shows, festivals, and the beaches, to a wider audience.

**First Action Implementation Steps:**

1. **Commission the services of a public relations firm that specializes in the marketing and promotion of cities and develop specific programs for reaching identified target markets.**
2. **Actively participate in the local and national chapters of the International Downtown Association (IDA) and the Urban Land Institute (ULI) with the goal of hosting an IDA annual meeting by 2010.**
3. **The Wilmington Economic Development Office and Wilmington Downtown, Inc. should prepare a plan and budget for meetings with potential investors to help market downtown.**



Marketing Wilmington to travelers would help generate greater visitation and thus increase the number of potential residents.



National organizations, such as this International Downtown Association workshop, can help raise the profile of Wilmington

## Potential Festivals

**WILMINGTON HERITAGE WEEK**

An annual, multi-day celebration of the City’s history, culture, and people that could be held to coincide with the anniversary of the City’s founding or other notable date. Consistent with the growing interest in heritage tourism, activities could include reenactments, interpretive shows, children’s rides, food tastings, and local artwork.

**ANNUAL FESTIVALS**

Examples include a *Taste of Wilmington* with food booths offering inexpensive samplings from local restaurants; *Music in the Streets* with various performers and musicians providing entertainment throughout downtown; a spring-time *FlowerTour* of downtown parks, street planters, and window boxes; an *Arts Street Fair* in September; a *Foliage Festival* to celebrate autumnal colors in October should the amount of downtown green space be increased; and a *Winter Wonderland* to acknowledge winners of a holiday decorations competition.

**SEASONAL EVENTS**

During the summer, weekly events could include Thursday afternoon concerts, Friday evening outdoor movies, Saturday morning puppet shows, and weekend markets. Additional regular events could include architectural tours, art exhibits, sidewalk sales, and road races on foot of various distances (2K, 5K, and 10K).



Waterfront open spaces provide an appropriate place for festivals and attractions.



A successful maritime museum captures and conveys the nautical heritage of a region



Historical features can be interesting and interactive.



The underwater Shipwreck Historic District offers an opportunity for interpretation and education.

### Additional Recommendations

**B Increase off-peak visitation with additional festivals and events (including seasonal and weekly programs).** Festivals and major events are opportunities to celebrate Wilmington’s assets. Festivals also encourage aesthetic improvements that last beyond the event. In addition to the Azalea Festival, such events could include regional fairs, historical parades, musical concerts, fireworks celebrations, running events, and regattas. The City should encourage local non-profit organizations to hold community picnics or city-wide events on the downtown waterfront, at the expanded Festival Park or the new Regional Waterfront Park. City staff would oversee the event set-up and ensure adequate electrical loads, drinking water, sanitary facilities, and vehicle access and parking.

**C Provide family activities, amenities, and services.** Family-friendly destinations generate more sustainable levels of spending on food and lodging, provide greater quality of life benefits, and can counterbalance areas with a nightlife-oriented character. Wilmington’s waterfront should include programmed activities, play equipment, and bike racks for children, and picnic areas, restrooms, and an amphitheater for families.

**D Encourage the development of a Maritime Museum.** The marine heritage of Wilmington should be interpreted and displayed in an attractive facility on the waterfront developed by a public-private partnership. The maritime museum should be interactive for people of all ages and include exhibits on ship building, types of watercraft, the history of the waterfront, and the ecology of the riverine environment. The museum should be located near, and relate to, the unrealized potential of the underwater Shipwreck Historic District.

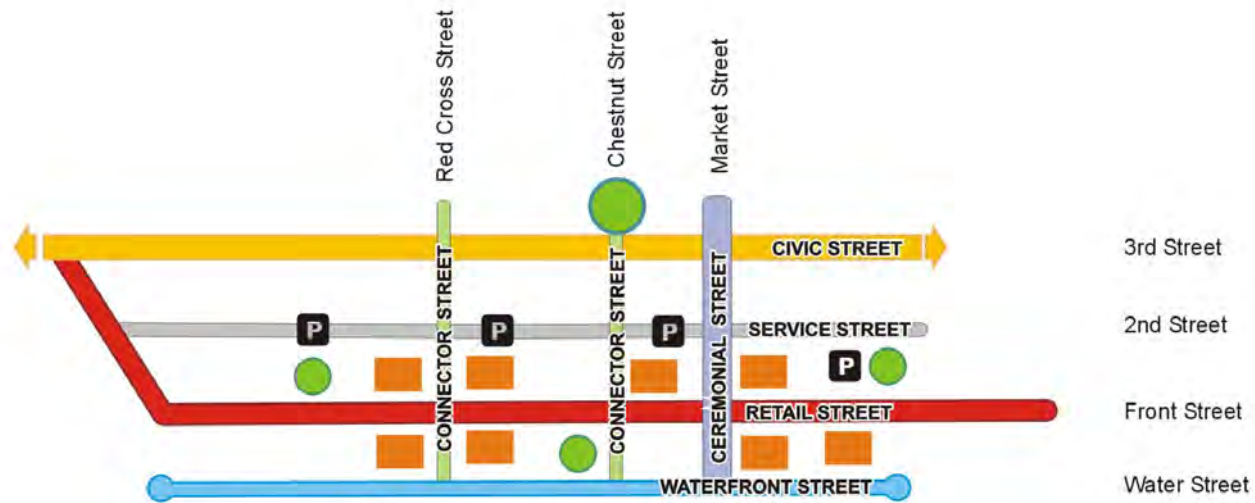
**E Reinvigorate the Railroad Museum as a public attraction.** With greater prominence, interactive outdoor exhibits, and a less intimidating security fence, the untapped potential of this facility could be realized and help activate the new convention center area.



An energized Railroad Museum would help attract children and families.

## II. Complete the Historic Core

Infill Wilmington’s historic downtown with new high-quality development and green space to enhance its intrinsic qualities, improve the urban fabric, and increase market value.



Redevelopment of key sites along prominent streets will strengthen the downtown core.



A partnership of public infrastructure and private development improved this waterfront.



Streetscape improvements installed in conjunction with roadway construction activities is another example of cooperative action.

## Strategy 4: Partner with Stakeholders in a collaborative approach to leadership, recognizing the mutual benefit of a strengthened downtown.

### First Action:

**A Apply a partnership approach to achieve public benefit on private development projects.** Entrenched divisiveness between interested parties is one of the biggest impediments to successful development and urban regeneration. As a result, public-private partnerships have become increasingly important to the economic success of a project and a city. City staff, developers, local non-profits, businesses and residents are all stakeholders in the development process and need to share a common goal—to improve the physical and economic health of Wilmington and make it the best city possible. Each stakeholder has a role in helping to realize that goal and needs to approach the development process in a spirit of collaboration.

The local government, including elected officials and city staff, and citizen activists are the stewards of the city and responsible for protecting the public interests. The public sector can help reduce risk and uncertainty for developers by assisting with land assembly and site preparation to make a parcel 'development ready', by streamlining the development process to minimize the time-value cost of money, by educating the public, or by contributing infrastructure or in-kind services to reduce the up-front financial burden.

The private sector, including investors and developers, bring real estate experience and savvy, an understanding of financial resources, and contacts with potential tenants and end users. Real estate developers are agents of change and should not be considered the enemy. They deserve a reasonable profit and should be encouraged to pursue the common good as part of their business practice.

A successful public-private partnership benefits both sides evenly and is characterized by clear mutual interests, shared efforts, and a common public interest. The outcome of such an effective partnership will help fulfill community needs and reflect market reality.

The City of Wilmington and Wilmington Downtown Inc. should continue partnering with the private sector to ensure that projects balance economic viability, design excellence, and the public interest. The City's planning staff should continue to offer technical expertise and engage in informal consultation on projects prior to formal submittal of a project for development review and Council action.

In collaboration with Wilmington Downtown Inc., the City should initiate proactive conversations with potential real estate developers to

encourage investment and promote collaboration. The City's economic development staff should assist investors with important development projects by mobilizing City leadership and staff in other agencies to negotiate and solve problems creatively (i.e. bonus density in exchange for nearby park improvements, street furniture, public art, or other public benefit; tax abatement for special projects; supplemental City funds for street infrastructure or utilities; etc.).

### First Action Implementation Steps:

- 1. Develop written policies requiring early consultation on development projects before formal submittal of a site plan or building concept.**
- 2. The City's Economic Development Office and Wilmington Downtown, Inc. should prepare a plan for meeting with potential investors to help market downtown.**

### Additional Recommendations

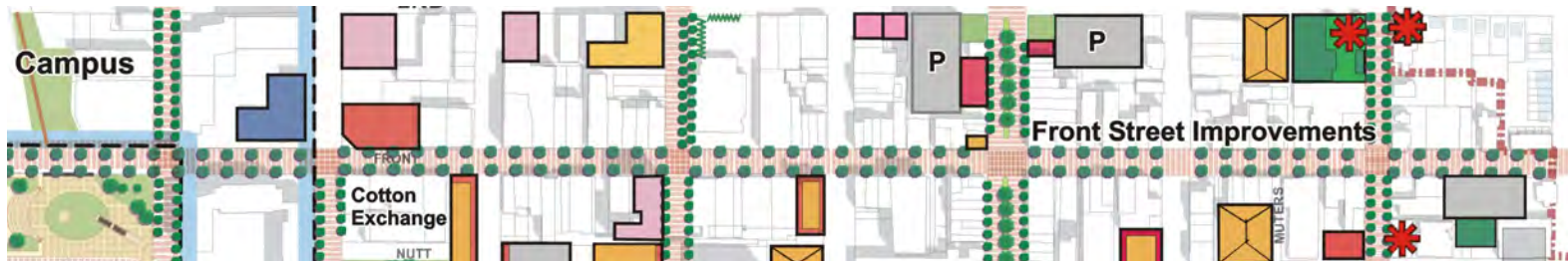
**B Empower Wilmington Downtown Inc. to participate in real estate transactions with public benefit.** Given the reluctance for direct public investment in the purchase of land, a private non-profit 501 (c) 3 organization with public responsibilities can be the appropriate entity for market intervention. Well-timed purchases or acceptance of tax-credit donations of property can serve to “land bank” key sites and avoid undesirable development. Following a successful technique from other cities, Wilmington Downtown Inc. would then transfer the land to a community development corporation for development of preferred uses (see D below).

**C Redevelop city-owned land for housing and preferred uses.** For key public sites, use a Request for Qualification/ Request for Proposals (RFQ/RFP) process to solicit private-sector involvement in developing preferred uses. Develop and disseminate a clear set of program requirements (building size, mix of uses, design character, etc.) and selection criteria (previous experience, financial capacity, public benefit, etc.). Downtown housing should include a variety of urban residential choices including condominiums, apartments above stores, live/work spaces, townhouses, and other forms.



Once owned by the City of Wilmington, the Water Street parking deck was a critical opportunity for redevelopment as a vibrant mixed-use project to activate the waterfront.

**D Charter a public/private community development entity to implement housing and preferred uses.** A community development corporation (CDC) with a charter to increase the amount of downtown housing and supporting uses would assist the private-sector development community in constructing a balanced mix of uses, attracting new residents, and improving the livability of the City.



Front Street, the commercial heart of downtown Wilmington, should be returned to two-way traffic and enhanced with special treatment.

**Strategy 5: Invest Public Resources** to improve public amenities, attract private investment, and increase overall community value.

**First Action:**

**A Return Front Street to a two-way traffic pattern with new streetscape treatment.** The existing circulation pattern in downtown Wilmington includes a limited number of one-way streets that are confusing and inefficient, particularly for downtown visitors. The one-way traffic restrictions on Front Street, the commercial heart of downtown, constrain vehicular movement and limit the visibility of retail establishments. These conditions will become more acute with the opening of Martin Luther King Parkway if motorists utilizing the new primary entrance to downtown from the north are not permitted to travel southbound on Front Street to reach the retail core.

Returning key streets to two-way traffic will help residents and visitors more easily navigate the area by car and improve access to parking facilities and businesses. With two-way traffic, the shops on Front Street will be visible from both directions. By emphasizing the movement of people, the pedestrian environment will be improved.

The existing diagonal parking configuration on Front Street is contrary to the conventional urban condition established throughout the rest of downtown, and should be reconstructed as parallel parking.

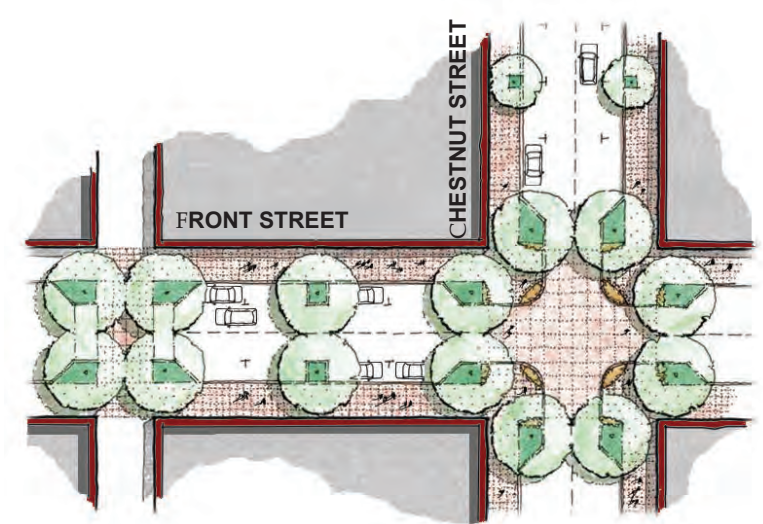
Streetscape improvements should focus on the sidewalk and include tree species, prototypes for tree grates, lighting standards, underground utilities, and special paving materials to identify crosswalks and emphasize the significance of the street. In addition, historic medallions could be placed in the sidewalk at each corner of an intersection to mark the historic district.

**First Action Implementation Steps:**

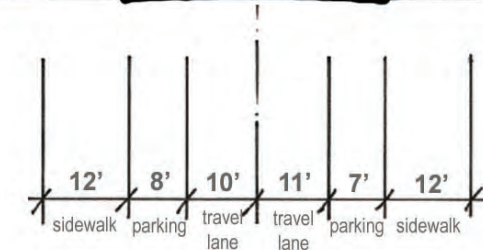
- 1. Develop streetscape improvement plan for Front Street with design treatments, construction drawings, and implementation budget and use as prototype for the rest of downtown.**
- 2. Send construction package to bid the installation of the streetscape improvements (can be implemented in conjunction with road or utility work).**



Streetscape improvements enhance a sense of place and encourage social interaction.



The sidewalks and intersections of Front Street should receive special treatment to recognize the importance of the street.



Two-way traffic on Front Street can be accommodated within the existing roadway width.

**First Action:**

**B Create Thalian Square as a civic park and public arts amenity at 3rd and Chestnut Streets.** Creating a new civic park adjacent to Thalian Hall that combines usable open space with public art would provide a much-needed amenity and anchor for the higher-density area along North 3rd Street. Thalian Square would complement the planned expansion of Thalian Hall on its eastern side to provide more theater production space. The proposed park would also serve as Wilmington’s town square for visitors to City Hall, a lunch retreat for nearby office workers, and a place for outdoor movies or art shows. Given the range of potential park users, businesses and individuals would likely be interested in sponsoring portions of the park, such as a fountain, gazebo, or pavers.

Public parking is available in the City’s 2nd Street parking deck which can be accessed directly across North 3rd Street from Thalian Hall.

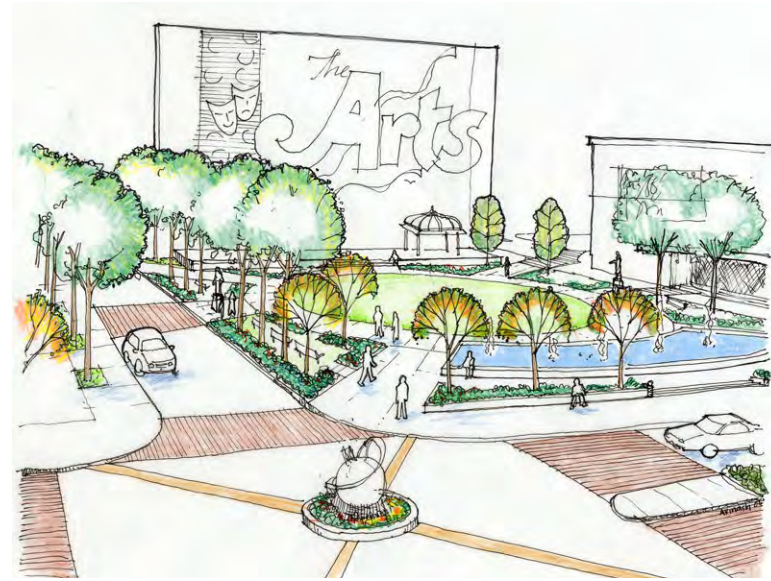
The proposed Thalian Square would be connected with an expanded open space on the waterfront (Festival Park) by Chestnut Street. Thalian Hall patrons could easily reach the waterfront for dining, shopping, or strolling along a pedestrian route enhanced with shade trees, furnishings, and signage.

**First Action Implementation Steps:**

1. Determine use plan for former New Hanover County office building at 4th and Chestnut Streets.
2. Develop detailed design for park.
3. Solicit private donations and sponsors for key elements of the park and intersection.
4. Install park and intersection improvements.



Thalian Square would also serve as town square in Wilmington’s civic core.

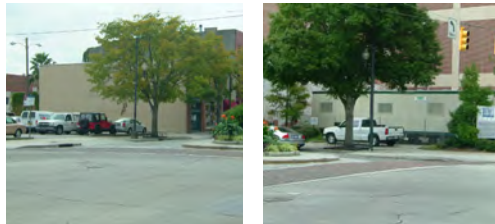


The surface parking area next to Thalian Hall should be developed into a civic park and programmed for public movies.



Wilmington needs functional open space that is compatible in scale and character with its surrounding buildings.





Small decorative parks on Market Street would serve as gateways to Downtown.



The surface parking lot behind the Cotton Exchange should be developed into a public park.



Strategically located downtown parks and gateways with links to the waterfront strengthen the City's urban fabric.

### Additional Recommendations

**C Establish downtown gateways and infill parks at key locations to enhance the urban fabric.** In addition to expanding Festival Park and Dram Tree Park and creating Thalian Square, new well-designed urban parks and plazas should include:

- Establish a major gateway entry at 3rd Street and Martin Luther King Parkway to announce the new primary access point to downtown.
- Improve two small parcels on Market Street (at 2nd Street) to create decorative gateway parks that mark the entrance to downtown's historic core.
- Create a public park at Nutt and Red Cross Streets as College Square in coordination with plans for the downtown campus of Cape Fear Community College and the new convention center.
- Convert the existing parking lot located next to the Cotton Exchange to an urban park with limited parking on Walnut and Grace Streets.

**D Provide a unified wayfinding system with coordinated entry/ directional signage.** Clear and simple signs with attractive symbols should be placed at key downtown gateways (3rd Street at Martin Luther King Parkway, Market Street at 2nd Street, and 2nd Street at

Orange Street) to guide visitors to the historic core and the waterfront. Consistent and informative map displays should highlight key attractions, public parking and services facilities, and other destinations.

**E Screen visible edges of surface parking lots throughout CBD as interim step before conversion to parks or redevelopment.** New visible surface parking lots should be prohibited downtown and many existing surface lots are candidate sites for new parks or redevelopment. As with recommendation 1C regarding Water Street, until underutilized sites can be developed for productive uses, there are a variety of landscaping techniques available for physically screening surface parking areas that would greatly enhance the visual quality of downtown. Methods for making parking areas less visible, within the constraint of a typical 4-foot planting strip, include a dense hedge of shrubbery (ie, boxwoods at 3 to 4 feet in height) or low walls of attractive materials (brick, stone, wrought iron, or wood 2 to 3 feet in height).

**Strategy 6: Develop Key Infill Sites** to help reknit the urban fabric, achieve a balanced mix of uses, and enhance the downtown character.

**First Action:**

**A Identify a key development site to become a demonstration of a premier mixed-use project.** To help set the pace for new development and generate enthusiasm for Wilmington’s new waterfront, the City should identify a key site to demonstrate the use of best practices. The goal of this “test” project should be to demonstrate the City’s ability to partner and negotiate with the private sector to achieve a well-designed, premier project with a true mix of uses (such as a residential component and street-level retail) that fits sensitively within the urban context of the site and exhibits high-quality architectural detail.

Candidate demonstration sites include portions of the Water Street parking deck site, the surface parking lots located on south 2nd Street, the industrial parcels on the north waterfront, and the former Ice House site. Premier building reuse opportunities include the Cape Fear Apartments, the First Union Building, and the former Wachovia Building.

**First Action Implementation Steps:**

1. **Develop an inventory of vacant and underutilized parcels, including surface parking lots.**
2. **Prioritize sites by strategic location (for maximum impact), property ownership, and potential marketability.**
3. **Identify the potential development project with the most prominent site and the most cooperative owner/developer.**
4. **Convene informal, senior-level consultation meetings with City leadership, Wilmington Downtown Inc., and the project developers to identify potential issues and shared interests.**
5. **Develop a package of incentives and requirements to encourage and promote the redevelopment of the highest priority sites and maximize mutual public benefits.**



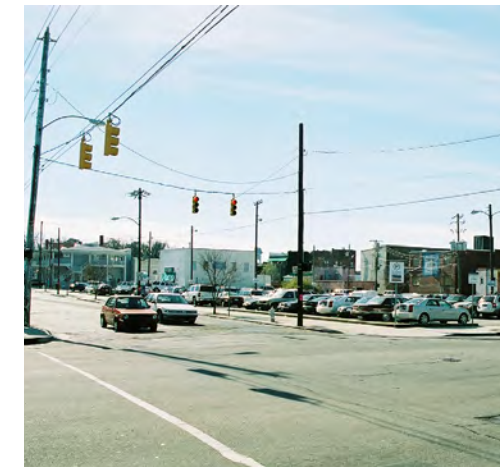
Redeveloping the Water Street parking deck as a mixed-use project would generate much-needed activity at a key waterfront site.



The former Ice House site is a critical location in the heart of the downtown core.



Industrial uses to the north of downtown offer prime opportunities for development.



The surface parking lots on South 2nd Street are prime opportunities for infill development.

### Key Development Sites

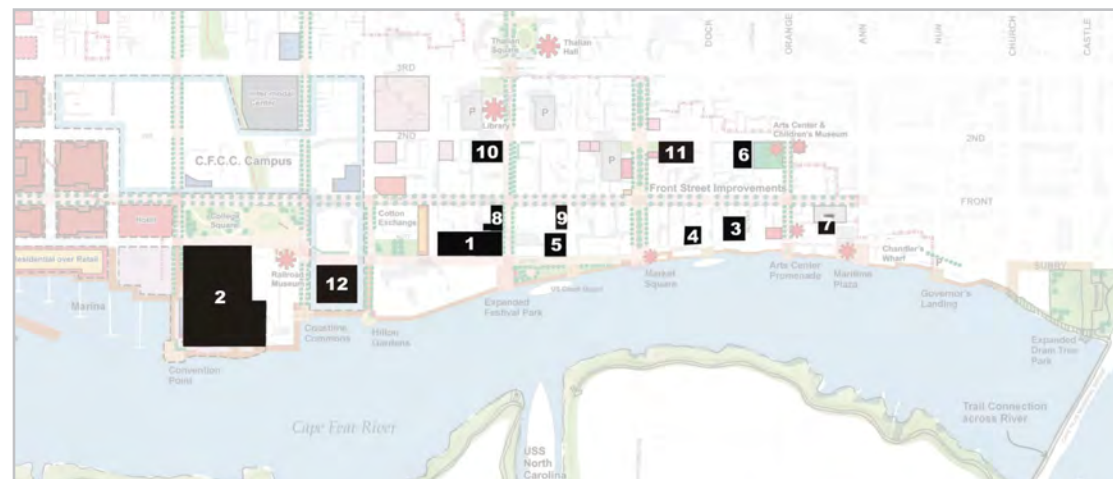
1. Water Street Deck
2. Convention Center Site
3. Former Ice House Site
4. Water and Dock Streets Lot
5. Water and Princess Streets Lot
6. 2nd and Dock Streets Lots
7. Water and Ann Streets Lot
8. First Union Building
9. Former Wachovia Building
10. Cape Fear Apartments
11. 2nd and Market Streets Lots
12. Cape Fear Community College Waterfront Parcel



Renovation (and expansion) of the Cape Fear Apartments would restore a Wilmington landmark.



Reuse of the former Wachovia Building would help revitalize the corner of Front and Princess Streets.



Downtown has a number of key development sites, including waterfront and downtown parking lots and vacant and underutilized land. There are also several buildings that are candidates for reuse.



The corner of Water and Dock Streets is too important to be used for surface parking.



The renovation and reuse of historic buildings greatly enhances a downtown area.



Vacant buildings should be redeveloped to strengthen the urban fabric with a mix of uses.



Infill development should be compatible in scale and materials to the existing downtown character.

### Additional Recommendations

**B Facilitate the redevelopment of underutilized properties for housing to achieve maximum benefit and a balanced mix of land uses.** Increasing the number of downtown residents will best strengthen and improve the quality of life.

Wilmington's downtown core is weakened by: (a) the overabundance of vacant and underutilized land, including surface parking areas that interrupt the urban fabric and disperse concentrations of vibrant uses; and (b) a disproportionate number of undesirable nighttime uses, including bars and nightclubs.

The solution is to greatly increase the number of people residing, working, shopping, or visiting downtown. Therefore, efforts to attract new development should focus primarily on residential uses, preferably with ground-floor retail, and to a lesser extent on mixed-use office construction. Downtown residents shop in local retail establishments, become instant stakeholders, and help change negative influences. Retailers seek a mix of residents and office employees to provide evening and daytime retail and restaurant demand.

Water and Front Streets are key streetscapes and pedestrian routes in the downtown core that support a mix of retail and residential uses, and should be developed with fine-grained infill projects that respect the existing urban fabric. To help encourage a residential character, no visible parking areas or blank walls should be located on Water or Front Streets.



Attracting a critical mass of new permanent residents, especially young families, will require bold actions.



Public infrastructure improvements and contributions can serve as an incentive for projects with public benefit.

**C Establish a financial incentive program to attract permanent residents and other preferred uses (demand).** A major goal is to attract a full range of age groups drawn to an urban lifestyle of convenience, amenities, and energy. Efforts should target young families, professionals, ‘empty nesters’, and other permanent, year-round residents. Based on conservative assumptions, each new downtown resident would generate an average of \$20,000 in combined income, property, retail sales, and other tax revenues each year. Therefore, the City should focus on providing amenities and support for quality housing units that will attract year-round downtown residents. One possible way to attract more residents to downtown is through City investment in a program of financial incentives to individuals to spur the demand for downtown housing and contribute to a more balanced mix of uses.

Due to the need for additional office employment, and given that each new downtown professional services job would conservatively generate an average of \$10,000 in annual combined income, retail sales, and other tax revenues, economic incentives should be considered to encourage downtown employment growth. Tax credits to a new business should be in the range of \$1,000 for each full-time professional services job created downtown.

**D Contribute incentives for exceptional projects (supply).** To encourage and subsidize development projects with exceptional merit and identified public benefits, the City should contribute incentives to developers and property owners. Such contributions could include assistance with permits and utility fees, tax abatements, or public infrastructure improvements (streets, sewer/water lines, stormwater requirements, etc.)

### III. Sustain the Momentum

Continue the positive changes that are improving downtown by reinforcing public commitments, refining regulatory tools, and strengthening existing stakeholder organizations.



Coordinated redevelopment of open spaces, key sites, and connecting streets will reinforce ongoing downtown progress.



A visible security presence and consistent enforcement can prevent disruptive behavior.



City police officers and employees dedicated to maintaining a safe and clean downtown can greatly improve the quality of life.

## Strategy 7: Address Quality of Life Concerns to improve the downtown experience for residents, employees, and visitors.

### First Action:

**A Increase downtown safety patrols and enforce regulations.** Negative perceptions regarding potential crime, relative cleanliness, and excessive noise are valid concerns that slow downtown regeneration. Although City Police have confirmed that most crime in Wilmington occurs outside of downtown, despite the fact that Wilmington is cleaner than most cities, and even though a certain amount of noise is intrinsic to all urban environments, the negative perceptions attributed to the abundance of downtown bars and nightclubs must be reversed.

This can be achieved by committing to and implementing the key recommendations of the Downtown and Public Space Task Forces relating to increased downtown safety and code enforcement patrols. The City should continue to assign more police and code enforcement officials to monitor disruptive evening and weekend activity and enforce local ordinances and state laws pertaining to noise levels, club operations and public services. These joint efforts should include a continued “zero tolerance” policy and an active schedule of inspections.

The code of conduct adopted by the Bar Owners Association should be reinforced with respect to employee training for bartenders and private security personnel. In addition, a voluntary team of downtown residents and business owners should be organized to help monitor evening street activity. Such a “yellow hat” team of citizen volunteers has proven useful in many cities to help report infractions and monitor enforcement efforts, thereby contributing to more “family friendly” perceptions .

It is important to note that legally permissible land uses drawing a predominately evening clientele, such as bars and nightclubs, are typically temporary “pioneering” uses in the evolution of a downtown. As additional vacant sites and buildings are redeveloped for a viable mix of uses, demand for the space occupied by bars and nightclubs will be replaced and converted to restaurant and retail uses. Therefore, while bars and nightclubs should be encouraged to locate away from residential neighborhoods, the concept of designating a formal entertainment district is not recommended at this time.

### First Action Implementation Steps:

1. **Announce and implement a major initiative to monitor compliance with noise ordinances.**
2. **Rigorously enforce impaired driving laws to increase public safety.**
3. **Require establishments serving alcoholic beverages to prepare and implement operations plans (addressing building occupancy, human and property safety and security, nuisance control, and parking), and conduct training for bartenders and security personnel (bouncers).**
4. **Coordinate daily street cleaning and trash service activities to occur between 4 am and 6 am.**
5. **Publicize and implement thorough and consistent enforcement of safety regulations to prevent disruptive behavior and public nuisance.**
6. **Continue the increased staffing levels of the downtown unit initiated by the Wilmington Police Department.**
7. **Organize a “yellow hat” team of citizen volunteers to monitor downtown activity and report incidents.**

**Additional Recommendations**

**B Maintain adequate sidewalk clearance of at least 4 feet.** Sidewalks crowded with a variety of desirable outdoor uses, including restaurant seating, musicians, and public art, that occupy up to 75% of a sidewalk, are indicative of a vibrant and dynamic street. However, when mobility is constrained by newspaper boxes, signs, utilities, and other inappropriate obstructions, the 4-foot minimum clearance must be maintained. This can be accomplished by consolidating and limiting publications to designated corral locations, anchoring furniture and trash cans, and most importantly by establishing official markings (medallions or other permanent indication) to designate the specific placement of outdoor cafe furniture and temporary (sandwich board) signs. With permanent markings of permitted elements, code enforcement can be consistently applied and violators of the public space restrictions can be quickly determined and fined.

Ideally, sidewalks would be 12 to 16 feet wide and the first 2 feet along the curb would be a 'step out' zone to allow for the opening of car doors; the next 2 feet would be the 'furnishings lane' for the specific placement of parking meters, street signs, trees, trash cans, and sandwich board signs; the next 4 feet would be the 'pedestrian clear zone' with ADA accessibility, and the

remainder of the sidewalk (4 to 8 feet) would be available for outdoor dining or similar use. For streets without parallel parking, the 2-foot step out zone is eliminated. In some cases, it may be necessary to widen the sidewalk to at least 10 feet to accommodate permitted uses (including cafes).

**C Encourage public use of parking garage facilities.** Publicize the new parking facilities and promote their use through educational outreach efforts. Consider placing an electronic sign at the entrance to indicate the number of available spaces on a continually updated basis. Encourage businesses to develop voucher programs or valet service.



In a limited number of locations it may be necessary to widen the sidewalk to maintain a lively and functional street.



A narrow but clear path for pedestrians accommodates walking when the majority of the sidewalk is used for outdoor restaurant seating.



Valet parking would help utilize the parking decks.



Vibrant and dynamic streets provide spaces for people to gather as well as accommodate pedestrian movement.





## Strategy 8: Improve the Regulatory Environment to provide clear and appropriate expectations that will guide downtown development.

### First Action:

**A Establish a design review board for areas outside of the historic districts.** The broad objective is to raise the quality of architectural design and improve the streets that exhibit negative visual qualities to a level of quality consistent with Front and Market Streets in the downtown core. Appropriately scaled and well-designed infill development will strengthen the urban fabric and complete the street wall, thereby enhancing the pedestrian's experience and creating an overall positive effect for the visitor, business owner, and resident.

To provide technical assistance to the design review board, a comprehensive review of proposed development projects should address both site plans and building concepts. For each project, the evaluation should address the proposed use, the profile (cross-section) of the building at the sidewalk, the maximum building height, building density, exterior architectural design, landscape design, streetscape treatment, material samples, and methods of construction. The technical review should be coordinated by the City's Development Services Department to include input from planners, building inspectors, and representatives from the economic development office.

### First Action Implementation Steps:

1. Develop qualifications criteria to guide the selection of review board members.
2. Establish procedures for conducting design review hearings.
3. Develop additional written criteria to guide a design review board and help define desired public benefits. (Examples are listed on page 54.)



Successful urban design protects the essential urban character and allows for sensitive growth and development.



Larger-scale buildings can be successfully incorporated into lower-scale historic areas with the use of upper-level setbacks and contextual design.

### Regulatory Guidance

The following lists of preferred features and project components are intended to help identify and define development projects with exceptional merit and, therefore, clarify the regulatory environment for City officials, design reviewers, property owners, and residents. These design parameters could be used to revise the existing Design Guidelines and direct supplemental design regulations for the downtown core and the north waterfront area.

#### Guidance for the Downtown Core Area

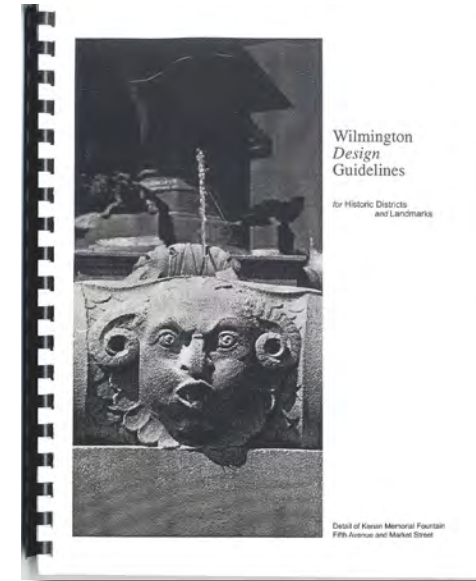
1. Activate the Street - provide at least 75% occupiable space on the ground floor (preferably retail space).
2. Indicate the Use - provide at least 75% glass for retail uses, 50% glass for commercial uses, and 25% glass for residential uses.
3. Design In Context - use materials and colors that are compatible with the existing character of the setting (including brick, cut stone, wrought iron, etc.)
4. Defer to History - step back new buildings at least 1 window bay at the 4th story when adjacent to an historic building.
5. Encourage Large Dwelling Units - maintain an average residential unit size of at least 900 s.f. and a floor-to-ceiling height of at least 9 feet.

#### Guidance for the North Waterfront Area

1. Preserve the Waterfront - provide an attractive building edge and open space toward the river and maintain public access along the river.
2. Continue Riverwalk - construct and expand the waterfront promenade along the length of the river (and extend over the river where possible).
3. Include a Mix of Uses - incorporate commercial, office, marina, residential, and supporting retail uses.
4. Extend the Street Grid - maintain the urban form of the core on north-south and east-west streets, especially Front and Water Streets.
5. Build to the Street Edge - follow the established 'setback/build to' line to maintain the urban character.
6. Establish Special Streets - create a hierarchy of streets similar to Market and Chestnut St. through design and treatment.
7. Internalize Parking Areas - place vehicle parking either within structures or behind attractive shields to eliminate unsightly views of parking facilities.
8. Provide Open Space - develop a park on Front St. adjacent to the convention center to accommodate the change in grade (potentially in conjunction with College Square).

### Additional Recommendations

- B Refine the Historic District Design Guidelines and the supplemental design regulations to close loopholes and address new issues.** The current design guidelines should be revised to better address potentially more complex design issues as development pressures increase. Examples of potential guidance are listed on this page.
- C Restructure the historic preservation committee (HPC) with increased professional positions.** Through the actions of the City Council Appointments Committee, the makeup of the HPC should be revised to include a registered architect, a registered landscape architect, a certified planner, a land use attorney, and a person with real estate development experience. With a more rigorous membership structure based on professional attributes, rather than affiliation with the historic district, the HPC will be more effective and less vulnerable to controversies and challenges.
- D Extend the local historic district to Walnut and 3rd Streets (downtown core).** To better protect the urban form of the downtown core, the Downtown Historic District Commercial Overlay should extend eastward from the Cape Fear River to at least 3rd Street and northward from Orange Street to at least Walnut Street (and possibly Red Cross Street). Within this area, existing resources should be protected and new development projects should be subject to the design review process administered by the HPC.



The current Wilmington Design Guidelines for Historic Districts and Landmarks should be refined to close loopholes

### Additional Recommendations

- E Adopt smart growth principles for directing public expenditures to reduce sprawl.** The public costs of roads and services are greater on a per unit basis in the suburbs relative to a compact downtown where much of the infrastructure (roads, water/sewer, and off-street parking) is already in place. Therefore, the City should focus its resources and public improvements on downtown and the waterfront to counteract suburbanization trends with high fiscal impacts.
- F Utilize new methods of funding.** Innovative techniques, such as Self-Financing Bonds, should be used to fund downtown public improvements based on future (increased) revenues.



Smart growth policies that focus development to the downtown area will help reduce suburban sprawl that is characterized by auto-oriented corridors..



With innovative funding techniques, new development projects can be encouraged to provide public open space and amenities.



**Strategy 9: Strengthen Downtown Organizations** by recognizing leaders, encouraging partnerships, and increasing cooperation.

**First Action:**

**A Market and lease downtown retail as a single entity with coordinated operations.**

Local businesses should work together to maximize their combined potential and stimulate growth in overall retail patronage. Under the leadership of Wilmington Downtown Inc., the downtown business community (including the Wilmington Business Association and the Chamber of Commerce) should attempt to operate much like a shopping mall and conduct cooperative promotional events, joint advertising efforts, and market downtown as retail and commercial destination. Small businesses particularly benefit from the collective voice provided by coordinated marketing efforts.

In recognition of the negative impact that vacant buildings have on retail profit margins, downtown businesses should assist the coordinated marketing and leasing efforts of Wilmington Downtown Inc. for downtown space. Wilmington Downtown Inc. should continue to serve as the central leasing resource for new businesses, providing information and assistance.

Businesses also need to coordinate, expand, and voluntarily standardize their hours of operation to create a more consistent vitality in the downtown core. To encourage the use of local parking decks, businesses could also subsidize and distribute parking coupons, or validate parking vouchers, for people who shop in their stores.

**First Action Implementation Steps:**

1. **Voluntarily establish, commit to, and promote consensus operating hours for downtown retail businesses on a seasonal basis.**
2. **Promote and conduct coordinated downtown sales events (ie, monthly sidewalk sales, seasonal close-out street sales, etc.).**
3. **Prepare an inventory of the types of advertising methods currently utilized by downtown businesses and determine their relative levels of success.**
4. **Undertake research on other available advertising media and venues.**



Coordinated and standardized hours of operations, patterned after the business practices of a shopping mall, would establish a consistent level of retail services and better meet visitor expectations.



User-friendly kiosks should provide maps and information consistent with flyers to help promote downtown.



Retail establishments, particularly those with historic character, should market themselves collectively.



The business development and marketing efforts of various organizations need to be coordinated for maximum efficiency and effect.



Wilmington Downtown, Inc. is the recognized champion of promoting and strengthening downtown,



The existing hotel / conference center at the Coastline Inn does not meet the full meeting and convention needs of the city.



The establishment of a Business Improvement District entity can help ensure that downtown is safe, clean, and inviting.

### Additional Recommendations

**B Coordinate the efforts of Wilmington Industrial Development with Wilmington Downtown Inc.** The economic development activities of Wilmington Industrial Development relating to downtown should support and supplement the efforts of Wilmington Downtown Inc. In particular, Wilmington Industrial Development should focus on attracting new technology industries to assist in the transformation of the north waterfront area.

**C Expand the City's downtown economic development efforts.** The City should continue to coordinate its downtown economic development efforts with Wilmington Downtown Inc. A rigorous business development plan and dedicated sources of funding to entice and subsidize new businesses should be established.

**D Authorize the Tourism Development Authority as a full-service convention and visitors bureau (CVB).** The lack of information on the hospitality market in general, and the downtown tourism market in particular, constrains efforts to understand and target current and potential visitors. The Tourism Development Authority needs a mandate for a more active agenda, including tracking hotel occupancy data by facility, conducting personal and telephone surveys of visitors

(visitor origins, basis for travel, length of stay, daily expenditures), and promoting events and attractions. As a CVB, the Tourism Development Authority should be the primary marketing force for the new convention center, guiding operations, booking events coordinating conferences with hotels, and conducting familiarity trips for corporate and meeting planners.

**E Recognize Wilmington Downtown Inc. as the premier champion of downtown and evolve it into a Business Improvement District (BID).** BIDs have been extremely effective in promoting and establishing vibrant commercial development in urban areas throughout the country. As the downtown commercial office base grows, Wilmington Downtown Inc. and the City should work together with property and business owners to form a BID for the downtown area. The City would levy assessments on real property, collect the revenue, and redistribute it to the BID for specific improvements within the downtown BID area. The BID would be responsible for enhancing public spaces, marketing and promotion activities, general beautification and maintenance of the district, and supplemental public safety efforts, among other initiatives.

**Strategy 10: Engage and Expand the Community** by coordinating efforts with surrounding neighborhood residents and property owners.

**First Action:**

**A Restore and protect Wilmington’s natural environment by creating a green envelope around downtown Wilmington and its immediate environs.** New and existing downtown parks should be connected with regional open spaces to create a network of usable recreational and environmental green spaces. Physical and ecological linkages should include a green ribbon of stream corridors, the rights of way next to existing rail lines, existing trails, former railroad corridors, the western side of the River, and eventually the Atlantic beaches. The connecting spaces should vary in character to provide for both passive and active uses (including multiple modes of movement such as walking, jogging, biking, and in-line skating). In addition to connecting open spaces and increasing access to recreation opportunities, a network of trails can be used by all age groups and has been linked to improved health.

3. Actively protect the west bank of the Cape Fear River by officially designating it as open space and working to provide recreational opportunities.
4. Incorporate a Rails-to-Trails pathway along the existing railway corridor (without precluding future rail service to a potential multi-modal center) near Hanover Street.
5. Establish a series of hiking/biking paths and nature trails connecting the Smith Creek corridor, Hilton Park, several City parks located near 20th Street, the Greenfield Park corridor, and Wrightsville and Carolina Beaches.

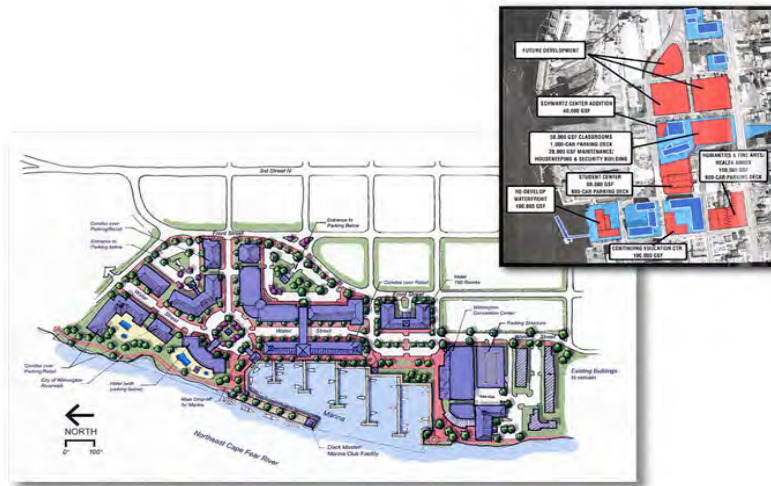
Well-designed and functional open space provides multiple opportunities for use by people of all ages.



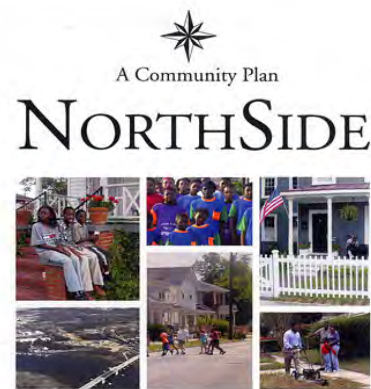
Dram Tree Park should be revitalized as large public park and southern terminus to the Riverwalk.

**First Action Implementation Steps:**

1. Expand Dram Tree Park adjacent to Memorial Bridge and provide a direct link to the existing Riverwalk as its southern terminus.
2. Establish a regional park at the north end of downtown near Holmes Bridge, Martin Luther King Parkway, and 3rd Street to provide a new gateway to downtown and serve as the northern destination of the Riverwalk.



Downtown growth needs to be coordinated with ongoing development initiatives in the north waterfront area, the expansion plans of Cape Fear Community College, and community planning efforts in NorthSide.



Coordination with Cape Fear Community College will be essential as downtown Wilmington grows and expands.



A new College Square could create a more cohesive environment for Cape Fear Community College and foster a sense of community for students.

### Additional Recommendations

- B Extend the urban grid and encourage complementary mixed-use development to the north.** Business development efforts should focus on the downtown core before addressing the northern portion of the CBD. In particular, speculative office space or residential development that would relocate users out of the downtown core should be discouraged; however, high-quality mixed-use development to the north that includes new users and tenants that would help strengthen downtown should be encouraged. To help ensure complementary development to the north, the urban grid of the downtown core should be extended beyond Red Cross Street (although the alignments of certain roads may be adjusted).
- C Coordinate with and support Cape Fear Community College expansion plans.** The educational and workforce training services provided by Cape Fear Community College are an integral component of Wilmington. The downtown location also brings approximately 7,000 students and faculty to the northern

edge of downtown on a regular basis. The City should work with Cape Fear Community College to support their expansion plans and encourage a more compact and coherent campus layout that would contribute to the urban vitality of downtown. Through land exchanges, design review, and coordinated redevelopment efforts, the City and the College should work together to transform the northern waterfront area.

- D Ensure that future downtown expansion is consistent with plans for the NorthSide community.** The future growth of downtown to the northeast should support and reinforce the strategies set forth in the recent NorthSide community plan. In particular, the northern portion of the 3rd Street corridor, which will serve as a gateway to downtown from Martin Luther King Parkway, should be developed with commercial uses in attractive, larger-scale buildings that differ from, but do not overwhelm, the pedestrian-scale community retail and residential uses proposed for North 4th Street corridor.

## Do's



Keep open access to the river with green space.



Provide ample room for pedestrians.



Treat the river like a valuable asset.

## Don'ts



Don't overcrowd the waterfront with inappropriate uses.



Don't create bottlenecks that restrict pedestrian movement.



Don't park on the water's edge.



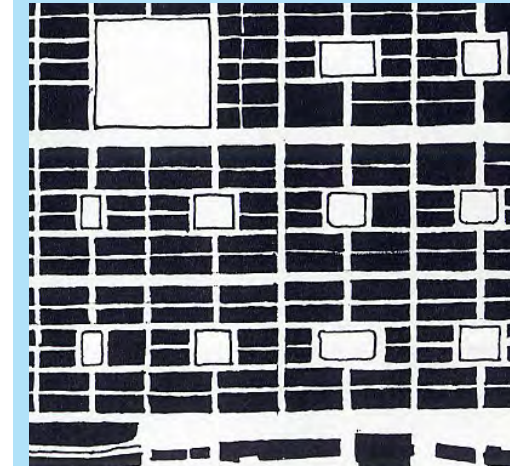
## Do's



Encourage buildings to embrace the street.



Preserve the scale and character of old buildings with new buildings that are complementary and distinct.



Intersperse open space throughout downtown.  
(Savannah)

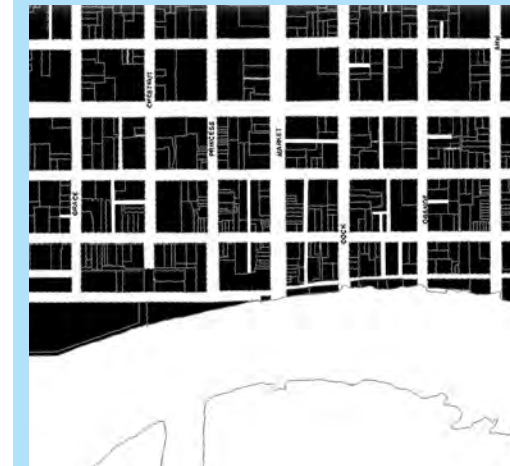
## Don'ts



Don't close buildings to the street with visible parking.

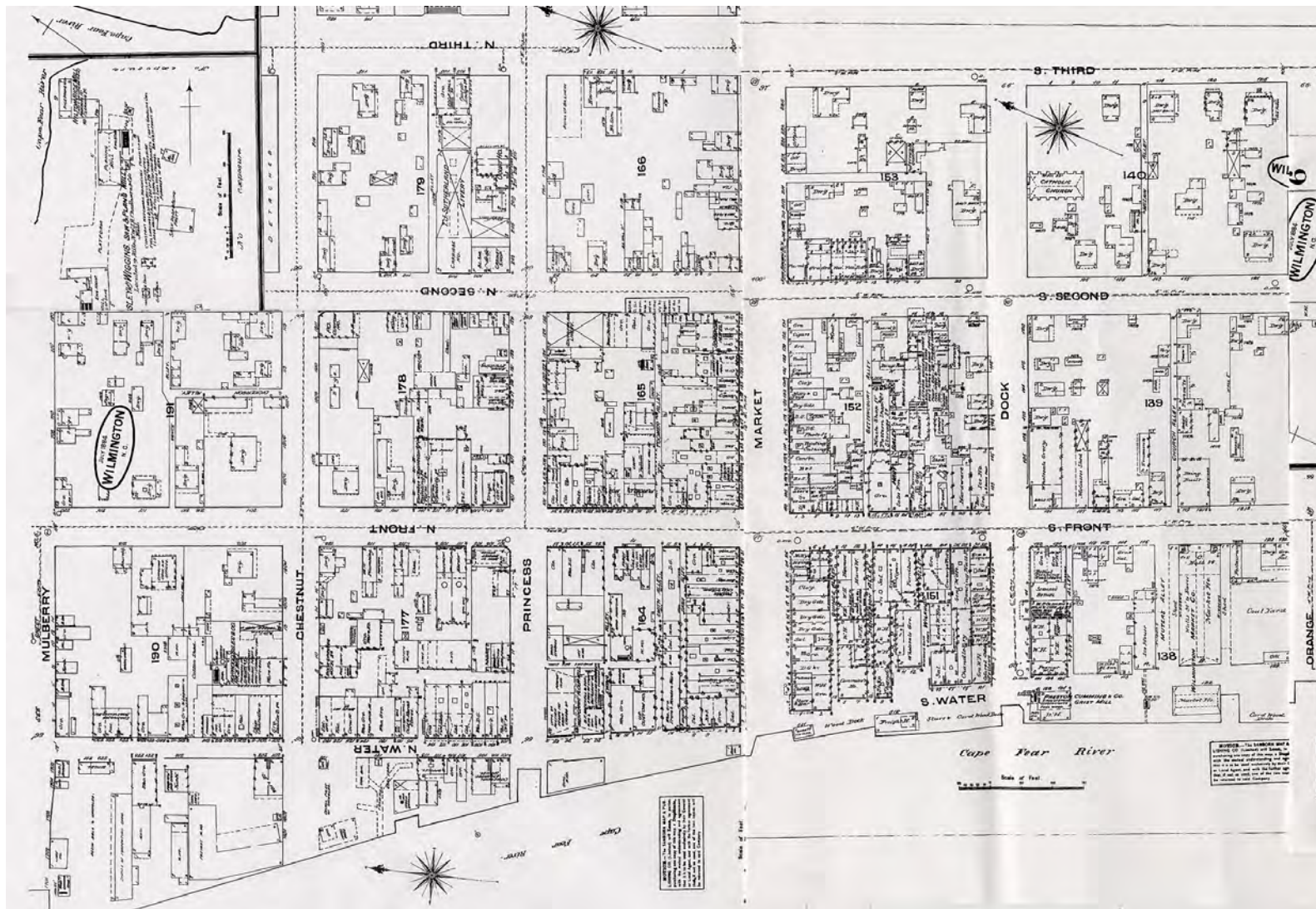


Don't overwhelm historic buildings with incompatible structures that are out of scale.



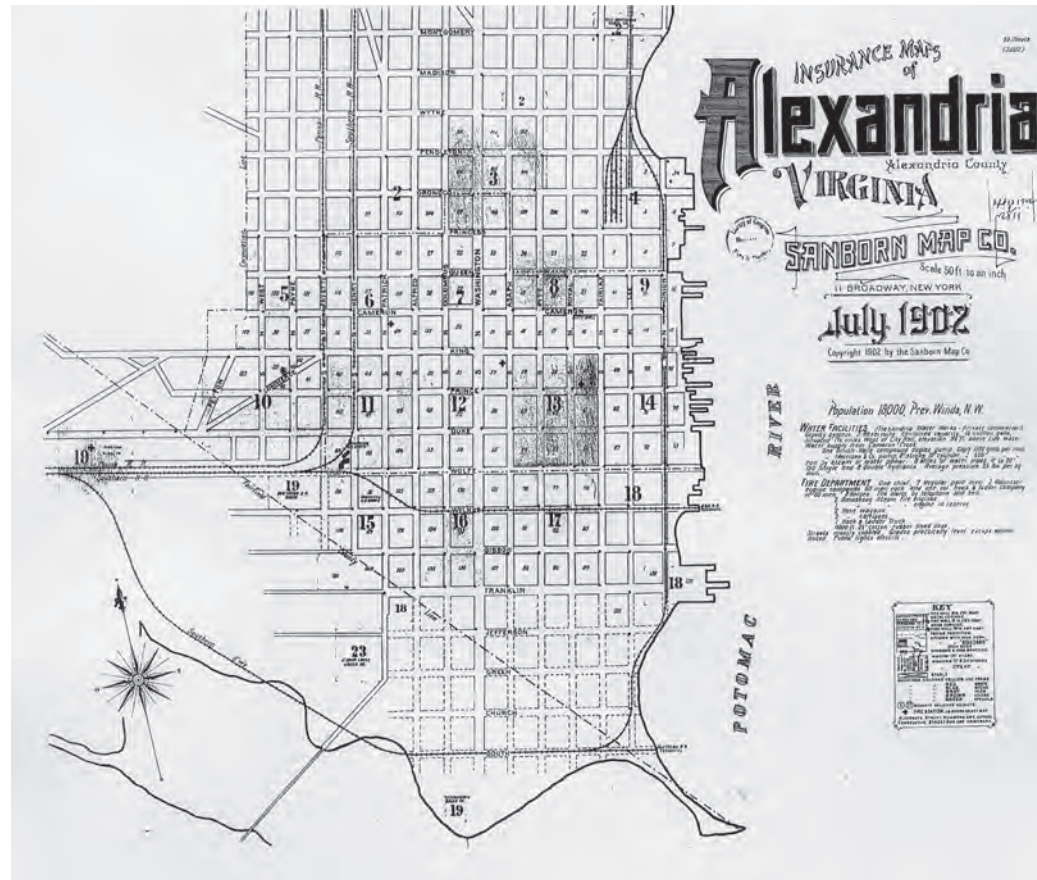
Don't build on every block and preclude open space.  
(Wilmington)

# Appendix

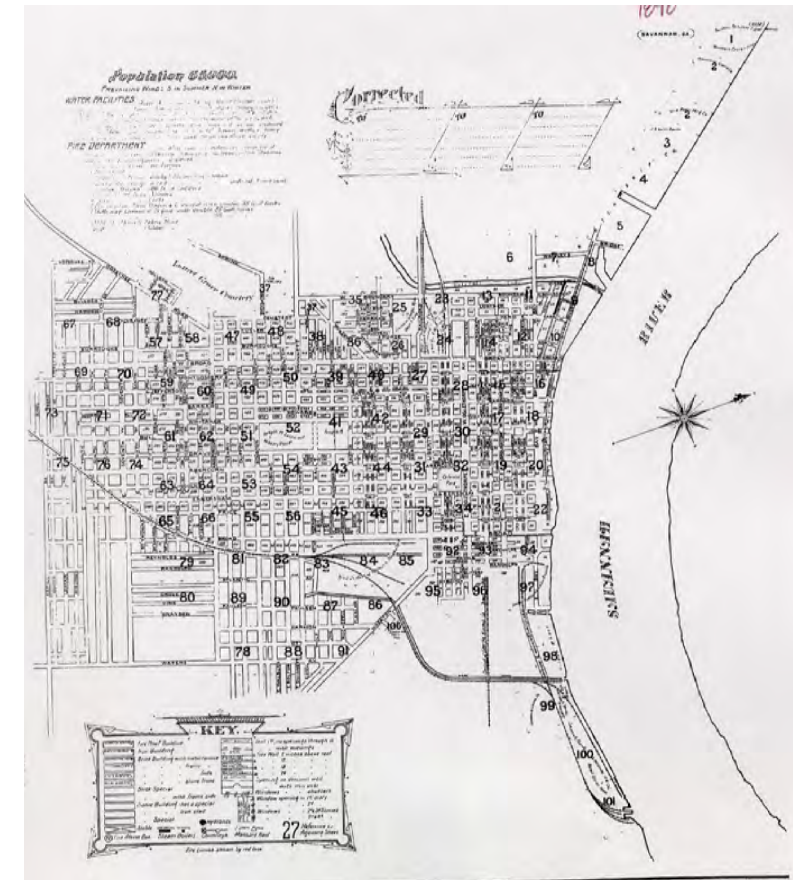


Nineteenth Century Sanborn Map of Wilmington.  
Source: U.S. Library of Congress

## Other Successful Waterfront Cities



Map of Alexandria, Virginia



Map of Savannah, Georgia

