

CITY OF WILMINGTON RIVERWALK

CITY OF WILMINGTON PUBLIC INFORMATION REPORT

Summer 2018



Marina 2004



Marina 2018

Before construction of the Riverwalk started in 1980, the riverfront was still largely an industrial area with few public gathering places. As it has been built, the Riverwalk has become the city's #1 tourist attraction. With the Riverwalk construction, areas that were vacant or dilapidated have over the years become busy residential and commercial areas with a lot of pedestrian activity.

Over the last 30-plus years, the city has invested more than \$40 million to build the Riverwalk in sections. The city has more than recouped its public investment to build the Riverwalk through the economic growth that was stimulated by it. For example, there are more than \$250 million worth of riverfront development with Riverwalk access/connections currently underway or just completed within the last year.



Wilmington Harbor, 1872
Photo courtesy of UNC-Chapel Hill



CITY OF WILMINGTON RIVERWALK

Early Beginnings

From its colonial beginnings, Wilmington's riverfront has a rich history. As a major port, the city has played important roles during the Revolutionary War, Civil War, and World War II. Historic markers along the Riverwalk introduce visitors to fascinating stories of the past.

Urban Renewal

The 1965 Wilmington Urban Renewal Plan covered the northern riverfront area, including the former Water Street Parking Deck. The nationwide 1960s and 1970s Urban Renewal movement focused narrowly on making cities more economically competitive. In the 1980s the city began construction of the Riverwalk to begin bringing people back downtown.

Riverwalk Design

Heavy timber structures, open railings, banner poles, granite, brick, gooseneck lights, and cobblestones reflect the character of a working wharf. These design elements seamlessly integrate with the charm of the historic district.

Points of Interest:

Northern Access

The northern access to the Riverwalk, by the Isabel Holmes bridge, was completed last year when Sawmill Point residential apartments was finished. There is public parking along Nutt Street that serves this access point.



Convention Complex

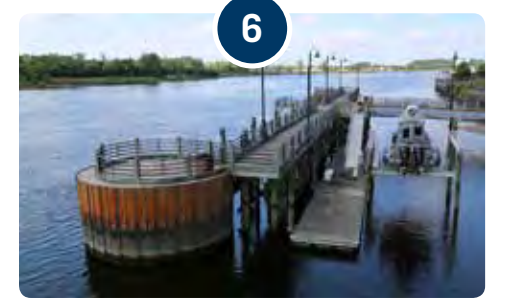
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The Wilmington Convention Center opened its doors in 2010 and the adjacent Embassy Suites opened last year, providing a full-service experience for conventioners to enjoy Wilmington's amenities.



Conlon Pier

The Conlon Pier dates back to the 1960's and is the only place along the Riverwalk where fishing is allowed. It is slated for major renovations and pedestrian upgrades in 2019.



River Place

River Place, the largest mixed-use project in the history of downtown, is under construction adjacent to the Riverwalk. See back for details.

Riverfront Park

The city completed substantial repairs to a portion of Riverfront Park in 2017 and the U.S. Coast Guard is slated to begin repairs to their bulkhead this year. See next page for details.

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2 North Waterfront Park

Future site of the city's North Waterfront Park. See back for details.

3 The Pier/Port City Marina

Until the early 2000's, the Northern riverfront was a hub of industrial activity, including an active loading crane and dock at the site of what is now "The Pier" a special events and concert venue adjacent to the Port City Marina.



Then



Now

4 Dram Tree Sculpture



The Dram Tree sculpture pays tribute to a historic cypress tree that once stood in the middle of the river downstream of Wilmington. According to legend, sailors, upon seeing the tree, would toast to successfully reaching Wilmington or for good luck upon leaving the Port City.

The 23-foot sculpture by local artist Dumay Gorham stands near the Convention Center.



9 Dock Street Access

Pedestrian improvements are coming next year to the foot of Dock Street. See back for details.

Orange Street Landing

The Orange Street Landing commemorates the site of a successful slave escape in 1862 and is part of the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.



11 Dram Tree Park

Dram Tree Park, while not yet connected to the Riverwalk, has public parking, a boat ramp, a canoe and kayak launch, and fabulous views of the Wilmington riverfront.



Wilmington Riverwalk: Looking Ahead

The Riverwalk runs 1.75 miles, nearly bridge-to-bridge, and connects the rapidly redeveloping northern downtown riverfront with the historic area along the southern end of downtown. It runs right through Riverfront Park at the foot of Market Street, which is the focal point of downtown. This section of the riverfront has seen substantial change in recent years as the city has made significant repairs and the Cape Fear Public Utility Authority has placed new utilities beneath Water St. The U.S. Coast Guard owns another section of Riverfront Park and will begin making repairs later this year. When complete, the city will finish this portion of the park with pavers, landscaping, a fountain and other amenities, similar to what has already been completed at the foot of Market Street.



North Waterfront Park



Design is wrapping up and work is set to begin later this year on North Waterfront Park, slated to open in 2020. This 6.6 acre park will connect to the Riverwalk and provide a large gathering place for all of our citizens to enjoy.

More information about this project is available at www.wilmingtonnc.gov/waterfrontpark

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River Place on Water Street

Construction is underway on the multi-story mixed use development on Water Street that will include parking, residential and retail space. The project, slated for completion in 2020, will maintain access to Bijou Park and re-connect Chestnut Street to Water Street, while providing public space at the foot of Chestnut Street.

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Dock Street Riverwalk Access

Visitors will soon have an improved Riverwalk entry at Dock Street, compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

