

# WILMINGTON CURRENT

**GREATER  
DOWNTOWN  
PLAN**

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**AFFORDABLE  
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**ANNUAL STORMWATER  
QUALITY REPORT**

**WILMINGTON**  
CITY OF  
NORTH CAROLINA

**PUBLIC INFORMATION REPORT  
SPRING 2024**

# GETTING HOME TASKFORCE

Five members of the Wilmington Police Department are working hard to combat homelessness through the Getting Home street outreach team.

The Getting Home team pairs five WPD officers, led by Sgt. Ronald Evans, with four county social workers, led by supervisor Katelyn Mattox. WPD Cpl. Melanie Medlock and officers Quiona Moore, Doug Costello, and Karen Miller work in tandem with the social workers to establish relationships with people experiencing homelessness, assess their needs, and connect them to resources.

Over the past year, the Getting Home team has connected individuals with tangible services — such as a driver’s license, cell phone, clothing, and bank accounts — more than 2,000 times. The team has also assisted more than 1,000 times with transportation to doctors’ appointments, AA or NA meetings, legal assistance, and other intangible connections.

Ultimately, the joint task force works together to de-escalate conflict and build trust. There are more than 100 instances where officers prevented a service call from rising to violence or the



*In Photo: Sgt. Ron Evans, Officer Doug Costello, and Officer Karen Miller*



*Supervisor Katelyn Mattox oversees the day-to-day field work done by NHC social workers Alan Bowden, Renae Steele, Timika Murphy, and TR Nunley.*

need for law enforcement action. This intervention strategy helps individuals avoid jail time or citations.

Recognizing the unhoused population faces a variety of challenges, the employees approach their jobs with creativity, care, and compassion. Way to go, team! ■



Members of city council met with Wilmington’s federal leaders in D.C. this March to discuss and advocate for projects and issues of importance to the community, including bridge and infrastructure funding, housing affordability, and water quality.

*In photo: Mayor Bill Saffo, Councilmember Salette Andrews, Rep David Rouzer, Mayor Pro-Tem Clifford Barnett, and Councilmember David Joyner*



## GET INVOLVED!

The City of Wilmington has a wide range of local boards, commissions, and committees on which citizens can volunteer to serve. There are currently a number of openings and upcoming vacancies. Get involved and apply to serve today!



*A new look for 910 Campbell St. with help from the Code Enforcement division.*

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING UPDATE

The City of Wilmington continues to grow in population, and so does the need for affordable, safe, and fair housing opportunities. As a top priority for City Council, the city established a dedicated department in FY24 focused on creating vibrant neighborhoods.

Housing and Neighborhood Services, led by director Rachel LaCoe, accomplishes its goals through housing services, code enforcement, community engagement, education, and safety.

The department's Community Development and Housing division oversees programs and initiatives that create and preserve affordable housing while building wealth for residents through loans and payment assistance. A little more than \$2 million annually from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, supplemented with roughly \$2.3 million in local dollars, supports housing-related counseling, loans, and rehabilitation efforts.

Housing and Neighborhood Services' Code Enforcement division is responsible for administering housing and nuisance ordinances to maintain safe neighborhoods. Additionally, the city is in the first year of the Healthy Homes grant, a 3.5-year, \$1.5-million HUD grant that helps eligible residents to correct home health hazards.

To supplement the department's work, the city disperses grant money every two years to bolster nonprofits. Human services grants fund programs that impact victims of violence or low-income individuals facing struggles in housing, access to healthy foods, and employment. With \$708,647 available this year, organizations can receive up to \$75,000. Staff provided preliminary grant recommendations to City Council in March, and money will be distributed between July 2024 and June 2025.



*Rachel LaCoe, Director of Housing and Neighborhood Services*



*City officials attending the Starway Village groundbreaking Feb. 1.*

On Feb. 1, city officials participated in an official groundbreaking of Starway Village, a \$74-million, 278-unit workforce housing development on Carolina Beach Road. Touted as the largest public-private affordable housing partnership in North Carolina, Starway Village has received local and state funds, with more than \$4 million from the city to aid the project.

The complex will consist of eight buildings with 34 one-bedroom units, 154 two-bedroom units, and 90 three-bedroom units, along with 568 parking spaces. All units within Starway Village will be subsidized to accommodate people earning 60% of the average median income and below, or roughly \$30,000, for at least 30 years. Starway Village is estimated to open its first phase to tenants by summer 2025. ■

 [For more information visit \[wilmingtonnc.gov/housing\]\(https://wilmingtonnc.gov/housing\)](https://wilmingtonnc.gov/housing)



*Planting wiregrass, a critical component of longleaf, in the understory of the forest assists with carrying fire during a controlled burn and improving the habitat for park wildlife.*

## PARDON OUR WORK: LONGLEAF PINE RESTORATION IN PROGRESS

Located within Wilmington’s metro area, Halyburton Park is one of the most frequently visited parks in Wilmington with more than 125,000 annual visitors. The abundance of nature trails allows the park to offer 160 environmental education programs through its Nature and Events Center. Recognized as a North Carolina Natural Heritage site, the park also serves as a high-profile longleaf restoration demonstration location. In addition to the annual Fire in the Pines Festival, Halyburton Park raises awareness about conservation and controlled fire through community events and public workshops that educate more than 5,000 participants each year.

In January 2023, the City of Wilmington expressed its support for The Nature Conservancy’s proposal to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Longleaf Stewardship Fund on behalf of the Cape Fear Arch Conservation Collaborative. This type of funding is vital to maintaining habitats like the one found at Halyburton Park. The grant was approved and provided for more than 700 acres of longleaf planting to reestablish a robust and resilient longleaf pine ecosystem within the Cape Fear Arch landscape.

As part of this shared goal, the City of Wilmington was sub-awarded \$9,945 to complete 45 acres of longleaf restoration at the 60-acre Halyburton Park. This work began in February 2024 and includes three key methods.

### 1 Midstory Hardwood Reduction

Hardwood species, like turkey oaks, can reduce the number of longleaf pines and groundcover in the forest by monopolizing resources. To reduce competition with longleaf pines, understory grasses, and herbaceous plants, tree crews remove these midstory oaks from the park.

### 2 Wiregrass Planting

Wiregrass is a native plant and an important component of the longleaf pine forest ecosystem. It is a fire-dependent species, depending on fire to flower and produce seeds. Planting the highly flammable grass in the understory of the forest assists with carrying fire during a controlled burn and improving the habitat for park wildlife.

### 3 Controlled Burning

Without controlled burning, the longleaf pines in the southeast U.S. would disappear. So, too, would the red-cockaded woodpeckers, Venus flytraps, and a host of other carnivorous and rare plants that need fire to thrive and survive. Routine, low-intensity fires at Halyburton Park are conducted every two to three years to maintain an open, park-like setting, allowing sunlight to penetrate the floor, and protecting wildlife dependent on an open pine forest ecosystem. While removing undergrowth, the scheduled burns make it easier for longleaf seeds and wiregrass to grow and develop. ■



**i For more information on this restorative work, stop by the Nature Center at Halyburton and talk to a knowledgeable educator, or make plans to attend the Fire in the Pines Festival this fall.**

# PARKS & RECREATION UPDATE



## Maides Park Inclusive Playground

The removal of old playground equipment and installation of new inclusive pieces are underway at Maides Park. The updated equipment contains ramps, ADA swings, a sensory spinning seat, a modular unit with slides, and an accessible surface. The project, managed by GameTime, includes new sidewalk connections, a replacement gazebo, and the installation of outdoor fitness equipment. The project is funded by a \$473,031 state grant and supplemented with local dollars.



## Refurbished Empie Park Tennis Courts now open

Eight tennis courts at the Althea Gibson Tennis Complex at Empie Park were demolished and reconstructed with new fencing and nets, more sidewalk connections, and additional seating. They are now reopened to the public and available seven days a week from sunrise to 11 p.m. Call 910.341.4631 or email [info@empiepark.com](mailto:info@empiepark.com) to reserve a spot.



## MLK Center Expansion Groundbreaking

On Jan. 11, the City of Wilmington broke ground on the MLK Community Center expansion. The \$5.57-million investment is a voter-approved parks bond project that will provide a new gymnasium with more athletic amenities, adequate storage, additional restrooms, and office space. The project also includes a full commercial kitchen for new programming opportunities, job training, and a space for aspiring food service entrepreneurs. The new facility should open by spring 2025.

## CREATIVE CORNER: LONGLEAF, BUILT BY FIRE

Ignite your imagination as you fill in the drip torch crossword puzzle with fire, plant, and wildlife-related terms.

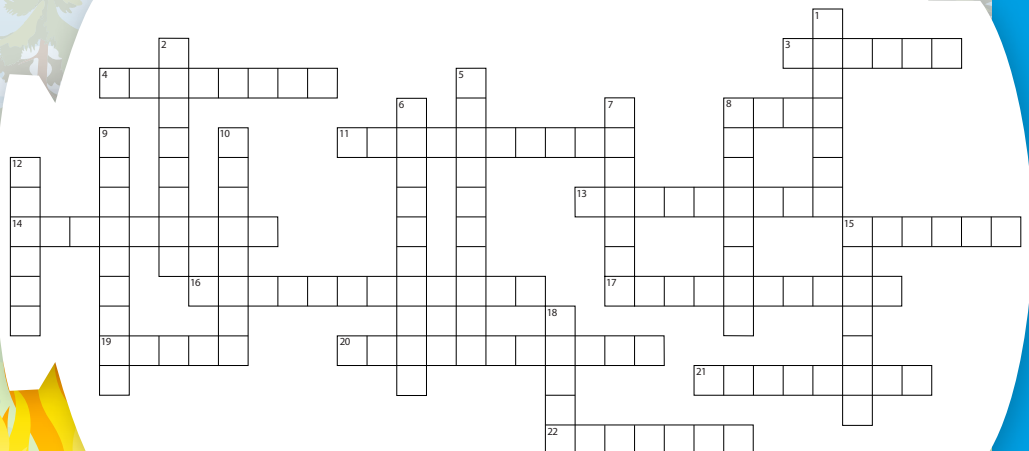
### DOWN:

1. A \_\_\_\_\_ is an important tool that protects workers from head injuries.
2. Tree crews remove \_\_\_\_\_ oaks to reduce competition with longleaf pines, understory grasses, and herbaceous plants.
5. A plant, animal, or insect that is in imminent danger of \_\_\_\_\_ is called endangered.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Park raises awareness about conservation and controlled fire through community events and public workshops.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ is any species whose geographic range or distribution is confined to a single given area.
8. A catastrophic \_\_\_\_\_ is not set by prescription and can result in loss of habitat, human structure, or life.
9. \_\_\_\_\_, a native plant, is a fire-dependent species that assists with carrying fire during a controlled burn.
10. Something involved in an aggressive attack is considered \_\_\_\_\_.
12. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a safe place often used to escape predators.

15. Pine \_\_\_\_\_ grow in groups of three on the Longleaf Pine and are found as a circular bunch out on the ends of branches.
18. A drip \_\_\_\_\_ allows a fire crew to ignite fire quickly and safely in specific locations or establish a continuous line of fire.

### ACROSS:

3. \_\_\_\_\_ is a general term used to describe the area at the tops of trees.
4. The fire \_\_\_\_\_ refers to three essential elements in a prescribed fire: fuel, oxygen, and heat.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ is defined as the movement of air.
11. An alteration or adjustment in physical structure or habits is called an \_\_\_\_\_.
13. A species or ecosystem that requires fire for survival is considered fire \_\_\_\_\_.
14. Prescribed burn managers try to find a natural \_\_\_\_\_, such as a creek, from which they set a downwind backing fire.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ means naturally found in an area (opposite of non-native or exotic).
16. \_\_\_\_\_ is the variety of life in the world or in a particular habitat or ecosystem.
17. Prescribed, or \_\_\_\_\_, fire refers to the skilled application of fire by experts.
19. \_\_\_\_\_ is tiny particles and trace gases suspended in the air when fuel is burned.
20. The mat of plants found on a forest floor is called \_\_\_\_\_.
21. The \_\_\_\_\_ Pine once dominated the uplands of the southeastern U.S.
22. An animal's environment is also called its \_\_\_\_\_, an area that supplies the animal's needs.



ANSWER KEY:  
 DOWN: 1. HARDHAT, 2. MIDSTORY, 5. EXTINCTION, 6. HALYBURTON, 7. ENDEMIC, 8. WILDFIRE, 9. WIREGRASS, 10. INVASIVE, 12. REFUGEE, 15. NEEDLES, 18. TORCH  
 ACROSS: 3. CANOPY, 4. TRIANGLE, 8. WIND, 11. ADAPTATION, 13. DEPENDENT, 14. FIREBREAK, 15. NATIVE, 16. BIODIVERSITY, 17. CONTROLLED, 19. SMOKE, 20. GROUNDCOVER, 21. LONGLEAF, 22. HABITAT

## A NEW COST-SHARE PROGRAM

The city's Heal Our Waterways Program is excited to announce a pilot cost-share rebate program to install green infrastructure on commercial, mixed-use, and high-density properties, and HOA common areas. Eligible property owners and HOAs can receive up to \$10,000 in rebates for specific nature-based stormwater solutions that go above and beyond the minimum permitted stormwater management requirements for the property.

Properties must fall within the Bradley or Hewletts Creeks watersheds to qualify for funding. Projects must be officially approved by the city's Heal Our Waterways Program prior to any construction to receive a rebate. Applicants will need to supply their own contractor. Funding is first-come, first-served. This program was created to encourage large-scale stormwater solutions that will help achieve the goals of the Bradley and Hewletts Creeks Watershed Restoration Plan to improve water quality in both creeks. ■

 **Email:** [healourwaterways@wilmingtonnc.gov](mailto:healourwaterways@wilmingtonnc.gov)  
**Web:** [healourwaterways.org](http://healourwaterways.org)



## 2024 EARTH DAY FESTIVAL



The annual Earth Day Festival will be held on **Saturday, April 20, 2024** from **noon-6 p.m.** at Long Leaf Park in Wilmington. This year's theme is "The Planet vs. Plastics."

The City of Wilmington Stormwater and Heal

Our Waterways programs are major sponsors of the event and will host interactive exhibits.

The festival features environmental information and activities with 50+ exhibitors. This FREE fun-filled family event offers live music, food trucks, raffle prizes, and a Kids' EcoZone. On-site free parking and trolley shuttles from satellite locations are planned. ■




 [wilmingtonearthday.com](http://wilmingtonearthday.com)

## CLEAR RUN BRANCH PROJECT

The city has completed the first phase of the largest stormwater capital improvement project in Wilmington's history — an \$11-million project to reduce chronic flooding from upstream development, improve water quality, and enhance natural habitat in Clear Run Branch a tributary of Bradley Creek.

Additionally, grant-funded green infrastructure projects are being installed in collaboration with NC State University. These projects capture and filter polluted runoff and include a bioretention area at Cypress Pointe Apartments, tree plantings, and converting a pond to a constructed wetland near University Landing. ■

 **Learn more in our Fall 2023 issue or at [wilmingtonnc.gov/stormwaterprojects](http://wilmingtonnc.gov/stormwaterprojects)**



## DON'T BLOW IT

With spring around the corner, it is the perfect time to refresh yourself on best practices for disposing of yard waste and other debris according to city stormwater regulations.

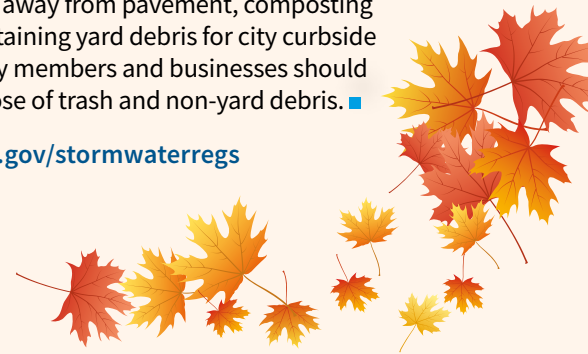
Did you know that debris can clog storm drains and ditches, resulting in flooded streets and properties? Even worse, debris that ends up washing through the stormwater drainage system adds nutrients, specifically nitrogen and phosphorous, and herbicide pollution to our waterways. This nutrient imbalance can cause algal blooms and deplete dissolved oxygen, leading to fish kills and impaired aquatic habitat.

That is why it is unlawful to rake, sweep, blow, wash, direct, or place any debris into the storm drainage system, which includes streets, storm drains, ditches, swales, creeks, lakes, rights-of-way and dedicated easements.. Additionally, property owners should keep all ditches, drains, swales, and other drainageways on their property free from obstructions, so stormwater can flow freely.

According to Wilmington City Code, items that can clog storm drains include “yard waste [grass clippings, leaves, pine straw, etc.] sediment, trash, litter or debris of any kind.”

Don't blow it this season! Blocking the storm drain system debris could result in a fine up to \$250. Consider grasscycling, or leaving grass clippings on the lawn as a natural fertilizer, blowing clippings and sediment back onto the lawn, turning the mower away from pavement, composting yard debris, or containing yard debris for city curbside pickup. Community members and businesses should also properly dispose of trash and non-yard debris. ■

 [wilmingtonnc.gov/stormwaterregs](http://wilmingtonnc.gov/stormwaterregs)



## THAT'S A WRAP

Driving around town, you may have noticed the city's closed-circuit TV (CCTV) trailers. The CCTV system is a robotic camera unit operated by certified professionals that can travel inside pipes and inspect their current condition, helping staff identify critical drainage and street improvement needs, and unusual items in pipes.

To highlight the services provided by the city's stormwater team, the CCTV trailer has a new look and is now wrapped with messages about drainage system and how to report stormwater pollution. ■

## GO NATIVE

Native plants are beautiful and require much less maintenance than a conventional lawn. Native plants are drought-tolerant, support pollinators and wildlife, and are already acclimated to local conditions without needing fertilizers or pesticides. This helps keep nutrients and chemicals from polluting our waterways when it rains.

The NC Cooperative Extension and the NC Native Plant Society have extensive native plant lists for our area on their websites. ■



*Purple Coneflower*

*Coreopsis "Tickseed"*



## AMPING UP FOR LIVE OAK PAVILION CONCERT SEASON

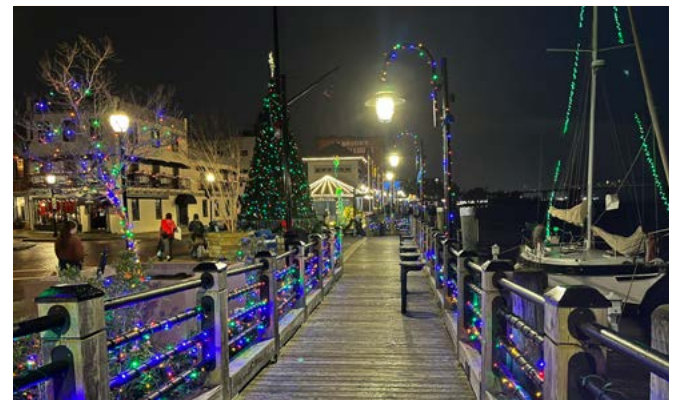
Soundchecking for its fourth year as Wilmington’s premier concert venue and urban park, Live Oak Bank Pavilion continues to lead the charge in the revitalization of northern downtown. After a successful 2023 season that welcomed a total of 161,686 attendees to 41 events, the former industrial site has evolved into a bustling economic driver for the region. In addition to creating local jobs and bringing top-notch talent to the area, about two-thirds of eventgoers are tourists from outside the city, patronizing local hotels, restaurants, and other downtown businesses.

The City of Wilmington’s most recent purchase of Skyline Center includes the parking deck located at 155 Brunswick Street, which adds 1,022 public parking spaces north of Red Cross Street, an area infamous for its shortage of parking solutions. The Skyline Center parking garage will satisfy parking demands for sold-out events at Live Oak Pavilion and other activities in northern downtown, reducing spillover into local neighborhoods and proactively preparing for future growth. ■



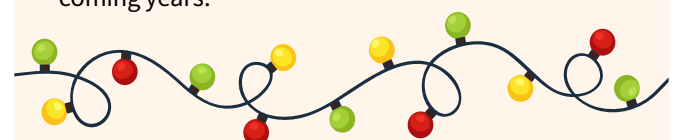
## RESTORING HISTORY

In October, a section of South Front Street underwent restoration work. City crews removed asphalt to uncover existing brick, fixing the old and adding new as needed. Now, a fully rehabilitated brick street — a piece of history — is back on display.



## HOLIDAY LIGHTS DOWNTOWN

A new Wilmington Downtown, iNC initiative shone bright this season to illuminate the historic Riverwalk and amp up holiday tourism. This pilot program bolstered the City of Wilmington’s downtown decoration displays and lit up the area with holiday cheer. WDI intends to elaborate its décor in the coming years.





# GREATER DOWNTOWN PLAN

Over the next 25 years, Wilmington’s population is expected to continue to grow. Managing this growth effectively is essential to maintaining the high quality of life residents enjoy.

The City of Wilmington is laying the groundwork to create the “Greater Downtown Plan” focusing on transportation, land use, and urban design policy in the 18 neighborhoods that make up downtown Wilmington.

The Greater Downtown Plan will supplement the Create Wilmington Comprehensive Plan, which identified public transit and mobility, enhanced safety, larger treescapes, and preservation of cultural history as local priorities. Relying heavily on public input, the plan will complement the Comprehensive Plan by developing strategies and action items for these downtown neighborhoods. It will inform future urban design policies and code, acting as a blueprint for decision-makers and city staff. The finalized plan will also provide high-level cost estimates and potential funding mechanisms for key projects, highlighting opportunities for sustainable growth.



## YOUR OPINION MATTERS

Wilmington is a great place to work and play, and no one knows that better than its residents. The Greater Downtown Plan will reflect a collective vision built on the pillars of community engagement and public input. Public workshops with opportunities to provide in-person feedback will be scheduled from April to November 2024.

Stay tuned for details on how to join the conversation using the QR code or stop by the Greater Downtown Plan information booth at the following upcoming events:



**April 20**

Wilmington Earth Day Festival at Long Leaf Park



**April 27**

Castle Street Makers Market



**May 4**

Spring Market at Legacy Architectural Salvage



Join the conversation!



## WMPO LOOKS TO THE FUTURE OF REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION

### Navigating Change

The Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization is planning the region's long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Cape Fear Navigating Change 2050. The federally required plan is developed and adopted every five years, with the final version used to guide funding, design and location, land use and development, and future studies for local transportation projects over the next 25 years. Planning activities began in April 2023 with adoption expected in November 2025.

Phase 1 of public outreach ran last year with six public meetings, 16 pop-up events, nine stakeholder interviews and focus groups, 13 regional presentations, and the launch of a survey and interactive map. In total, 2,347 survey responses were collected, 5,840 pins were dropped on the interactive map, and 6,112 public comments were received.

Residents' top three funding priorities were bicycle and pedestrian facilities, public transportation, and projects to improve and maintain roads. Their leading concerns included safety, congestion, and public transportation. Phase 2 of public outreach will begin in June 2025 for feedback sought on the draft plan.

### Wilmington Downtown Trail Phases 2 and 3

The WMPO is partnering with the North Carolina Department of Transportation Integrated Mobility Division on next steps for the Wilmington Downtown



*WMPO staff members Greer Shivers and Emma Stogner connected with residents for input during a community outreach event at Padgett Station.*

Trail, which will eventually join the River to the Sea Bikeway to the future Multimodal Transportation Center, Cape Fear Community College, and the Riverwalk. Phase 1 is currently in design, connecting 3rd Street to the Love Grove Bridge, with the first half mile running along the former Atlantic Coast Railway.

WMPO and NCDOT are conducting a study on corridor alternatives for phases 2 and 3 of the trail. Public engagement was held from October through December 2023 with in-person events and an online survey. In all, 486 survey responses were collected, 352 map comments were received, and 59 in-person conversations were held. The top concerns expressed were environmental preservation and safety at road crossings. Trail alignment options are under review with another chance for public feedback to be held this spring.

### Mitigating Traffic Congestion

The WMPO has been hard at work to mitigate traffic congestion and improve commuting in the Wilmington urban area, especially during the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge lane closures. Its Go Coast program encourages multimodal transportation use such as bicycling, walking, carpooling, public transit, and teleworking. Utilizing alternative options can help improve commute time by taking additional cars off the road and decreasing time spent behind the wheel in traffic.








Ahead of the project, WMPO developed a Community Friendly Employer toolkit highlighting these alternatives for area businesses. Staff also provided local jurisdictions a communications toolkit for highlighting alternative transportation options to residents, depending on what is available and practical for each area.

The WMPO, Wave Transit, and NCDOT also collaborated to expand RideMICRO in Brunswick County. RideMICRO is an on-demand ridesharing service offered by Wave Transit for \$2 per trip. To respond to the bridge closure, an additional van was added to serve Zone 1, connecting northern Brunswick County with downtown Wilmington, from 6:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. on weekdays. Learn how to schedule a RideMICRO trip at [wavetransit.com/ridemicro](http://wavetransit.com/ridemicro). ■



 **For more information about WMPO's plans and initiatives, visit [wmpo.org](http://wmpo.org).**

## ROAD PROJECT UPDATE

The City of Wilmington is gearing up to both wrap up and break ground on a handful of transportation projects this year including:

-  The southern section of the Masonboro Loop Trail from Navaho Trail to Masonboro Elementary School, and the final leg of the route extending to Pine Grove Drive
-  The next two phases of the Greenville Loop Trail, a multi-use path connecting the new Holly Tree Road trail with the River to the Sea bike route on Park Avenue
-  A pedestrian crossing at South College Road and Holly Tree Road
-  A pedestrian hawk signal for crossing Market Street at 21st Street
-  Realignment of the Pine Grove Drive and Oleander Drive intersection and improvements at the Pine Grove Drive and MacMillan Avenue intersection
-  Construction of the Hooker Road multi-use path, sidewalks and bike lanes along Greenville Avenue, and a multi-use path along Hinton Avenue
-  A sidewalk along Wrightsville Avenue from Independence Boulevard to Hawthorne Drive and adding a roundabout at the intersection of Wrightsville Avenue and Wallace Avenue

Along with construction projects, the city works annually to maintain and preserve 800 lane miles of roadway. City crews use a data-driven system to prioritize the type of repair or preventative treatments each street receives. Approximately \$12.2 million was spent in the last two years for:

-  82 lane miles of pavement rejuvenation, i.e., “sunscreen” for asphalt that extends its overall life
-  46 lane miles of pavement preservation, i.e., a sealant used to extend the overall life of the asphalt



 Pedestrian & Trail Projects

 Traffic Projects

 Road Improvements



*A new multi-use path will connect Holly Tree Road trail with the River to the Sea bike route.*

-  10 lane miles of micro-surfacing, i.e., a thin overlay on top of existing pavement, often accompanied by spot and crack repairs
-  38.41 lane miles of milling and resurfacing, i.e., grinding up the top two to three inches of asphalt and applying a new surface

Additional road work is planned for 2024 including milling and resurfacing of 28 lane miles. ■

## COMING SOON!

City of Wilmington residential trash services are optimizing their fleet with nine new automated side-loader (ASL) body trucks. The ASL trucks use an automated arm to swiftly load and unload trash carts, increasing productivity, ensuring route efficiency, and providing a safer environment for operators. The new trucks are estimated to be in service later this year. In preparation for this upgrade, City of Wilmington recycling and trash customers will receive additional information on the new trucks and their trash service over the next several months.



*The City of Wilmington will implement nine automated side-loader body trucks into trash pickup service starting this fall.*

## WILMINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT REPORT

### Latest Crime Stats

For the third year in a row, Wilmington Police Department Chief Donny Williams announced that violent crime was down in 2023. With a nearly 5% reduction, violent crime reached a record low since 2009. Homicides have gone down by 7.69% and rapes decreased by nearly 50%. Officers responded to 15% fewer crimes at Wilmington Housing Authority communities, with a 100% reduction in robberies and an 89% decrease in motor vehicle theft.

Crime reduction is a community effort. WPD officers serve and protect residents daily while partnering with the New Hanover County Sheriff's Office, nonprofit organizations, faith-based communities, and the public.



### Welcome to the Team

In February, 14 new officers were sworn into the WPD after graduating from Basic Law Enforcement Training.

The department also announced the name of its new K-9, Zeus. He is a 12-month-old German Shepherd/Belgian Malinois mix, who is currently in training for his law enforcement career. The WPD K-9 Unit was created

in 1982 by Captain Bruce Hickman, and since that time dogs have worked alongside their handlers to locate drugs, weapons, bombs, and even apprehend criminals. Currently the unit is made up of five dogs: Dex, Jacco, Marian, Blue, and Zeus.



*Zeus joins the WPD as its newest K-9.*

## WILMINGTON FIRE DEPARTMENT REPORT



The Annual Guns 'N' Hoses Charity Hockey Game raised \$12,000 for the Domestic Violence Shelter and Services. The Port City Blue Liners, made up of local police officers, took home a win against the Port City Heat, comprised of local firefighters.

### New Crisis Response Dogs

WFD added two crisis response facility dogs to its program with the paws4people Foundation, which emphasizes mental health and wellness. Adding to the three dogs — Rhys, Heart, and Axel — already in service, Jethro will report to work with his handler, Lt. Josh Baltz, at Station 3 on C Shift. Clyde will report to work with his handler, Captain John Greene, who works in the Training Division.

### Calling all applicants: Join this summer's Junior Fire Academy

Every summer, WFD hosts two sessions of its Junior Fire Academy. During the camp-like experience, high school students learn life-saving skills, including CPR, first aid, and how to use a fire extinguisher. They also experience firsthand what it's like to be a firefighter by trying on gear, searching for a victim, and taking on a scaled-down version of the firefighter physical agility test. Junior Fire Academy is free to attend with lunch provided each day. To learn more or apply, visit [wilmingtonnc.gov/fire](http://wilmingtonnc.gov/fire).



# STRATEGIC PLAN ADOPTION

The City of Wilmington is looking to its future with the adoption of its 2025-2030 Strategic Plan. Approved by City Council in February, the plan sets forth a vision for how the city will create a better place for all residents to live.

Acting as a roadmap to guide the city’s work, the strategic plan features five key focus areas:

- Housing and Neighborhoods
- Transportation and Infrastructure
- Safety
- Organizational Excellence
- Economic Development and Cultural Vibrancy

For each of these topics, the plan outlines objectives and initiatives to drive progress. It also informs department business proposals and annual individual employee work plans. The plan’s design and content was guided by city staff, stakeholders, and community input over the last two years.

## What does this mean for residents?

Outlined in this five-year plan is the need for more quality, affordable housing options and engagement with community members to foster vibrant neighborhoods. The city will also concentrate on attracting new businesses, growing current ones, and enhancing Wilmington’s position as an entertainment and cultural destination.

The plan aims to reduce violence, especially among youth, and expand programs that assist people experiencing homelessness or substance abuse issues. It also takes steps to establish an efficient, sustainable multimodal transportation network, geared at reducing congestion, improving roads and sidewalks, and maintaining city infrastructure.

Internally, the city will implement new methods of recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce while developing consistent customer service standards to increase accessibility to its services. The strategic plan is intended to be a living, breathing document, allowing city staff flexibility to respond to the community’s ever-changing needs.



## STAY CURRENT

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- @cityofwilm
- cityofwilmington
- wilmingtonnc.gov

Stay up to date with what's happening in the city by subscribing to the Wilmington Current weekly e-newsletter: [thewilmingtoncurrent.com](http://thewilmingtoncurrent.com)



## CITY COUNCIL

- Bill Saffo, Mayor
- Clifford D. Barnett, Sr., Mayor Pro-tem
- Charlie Rivenbark
- Luke Waddell, Sr.
- Kevin Spears
- David Joyner
- Salette Andrews

City Council meetings are generally held on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. in Council Chambers. Meetings are streamed live on:

- GTV8 (Spectrum channel 8)
- [wilmingtonnc.gov/gtv](http://wilmingtonnc.gov/gtv) (view previous meetings on-demand)
- [youtube.com/user/cityofwilmington](https://youtube.com/user/cityofwilmington)

## CONTACT US!

City Information .....	910.341.7800
Cape Fear Public Utility Auth .....	910.332.6550
Code Enforcement .....	910.341.3266
Fire Non-emergency.....	910.341.7846
Parking.....	910.762.5678
Parks and Recreation .....	910.341.7855
Police Non-emergency .....	910.343.3600
Street Maintenance .....	910.341.7879
Stormwater .....	910.341.4646
Trash and Recycling .....	910.341.7875
Zoning.....	910.254.0900



# THE STATE OF WILMINGTON'S WATERWAYS

## 2023 UNCW SURFACE WATER QUALITY REPORT

(The following is a summary of the condition of major creeks and waterways, not drinking water, within the city limits.)

The State of Wilmington's Waterways 2023 UNCW Surface Water Quality Report is a summary of the current health and condition of the major creeks and waterbodies that fall within Wilmington's city limits. UNCW water quality sampling information was provided by Dr. Michael Mallin of the UNCW Center for Marine Science and lead scientist for the Wilmington Watersheds Project. The water quality sampling summary is based on data collected between the months of **January-December 2023** and is presented from a watershed perspective, regardless of political boundaries.

The summary describes each watershed by size, state classification, state status, reason for impairment, and UNCW sampling summary. For more information on the current health of Wilmington's waterways or to read Dr. Mallin's entire report, please visit:

<https://uncw.edu/research/centers/marine-science/research/aquatic-ecology/>

### Water Definitions

**Algal Bloom** Rapidly-occurring growth and accumulation of algae in a waterway resulting from excess nutrients that can lead to low dissolved oxygen levels and fish kills. (Sources: fertilizers, grass clippings, pet waste)

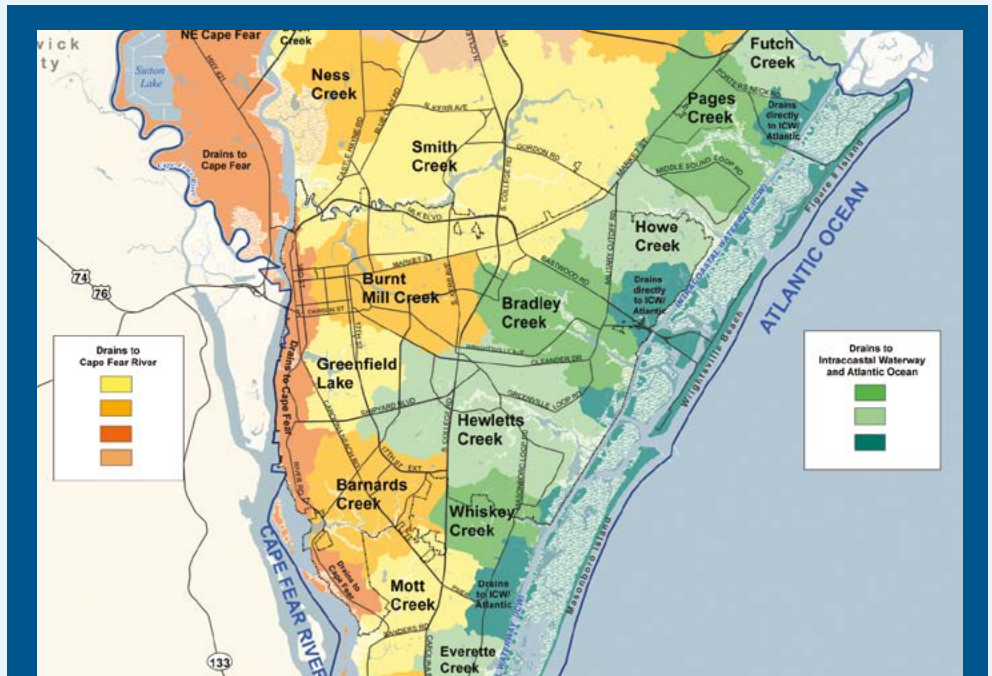
**Biological Integrity** The ability of an ecosystem to support and maintain a balanced and indigenous community of organisms.

**Best Management Practice (BMP) or Stormwater Control Measure (SCM)** Action or landscape modification that reduces the amount of pollution and/or the quantity of stormwater flowing into waterways. BMPs are actions, like picking up after pets, or on-the-ground practices, such as rain barrels and rain gardens.

**Chlorophyll a** Allows plants to photosynthesize and gives plants their green color. Waters that have high chlorophyll a levels are typically high in nutrients (phosphorus and nitrogen), which cause algae to grow or bloom. When algae die, it depletes oxygen from the water and can cause fish kills.

**Dissolved Oxygen (DO)** The amount of oxygen available in water. Fish and aquatic organisms require adequate levels of DO to survive.

**Fecal Coliform Bacteria** Bacteria present in the intestines and feces of warm-blooded animals. High counts of fecal coliform bacteria in a waterway indicate the presence of other disease-causing pathogens which can cause sickness and disease in humans and animals. (Sources: pet waste, sewer overflows, septic system failure)



### UNCW Results Summary:

Lower Burnt Mill Creek and upper Bradley Creek maintain some of the most-polluted waters in the city. However, upper Bradley Creek is currently undergoing restoration work in the Clear Run Branch tributary.

Greenfield Lake continues to host nuisance algal blooms, and the tributary creeks, Jumping Run Branch and Squash Branch, load high fecal bacteria and nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorous) into the lake. Extensive water sampling in the upper Jumping Run Branch was conducted for the past two years in advance of wetland rehabilitation, and dredging in the Squash Branch tributary is in the works.

**Hypoxia** Low dissolved oxygen levels in a waterway which can result in fish kills.

**Nutrients** Substances (e.g. nitrogen and phosphorous) needed by plants and animals for growth; however, excessive nutrients in a waterway can lead to harmful aquatic weed and algae growth, low DO levels, and fish kills. (Sources: fertilizers, yard waste, pet waste)

**Pathogens** Disease-causing organisms, such as bacteria and viruses. (Source: pet waste)

**PAHs (Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons)** Toxic byproducts of petroleum and fossil fuels, which can be harmful to humans and aquatic life and can persist in the environment for a long time. (Sources: auto exhaust, motor oil, parking lot sealcoats, roofing tars, coal power plants)

**Sediment** Particles of silt, clay, dirt, or sand, caused by land-disturbing activities or natural weathering, that wash into waterways. Sediment can settle to the bottom or remain suspended in water. (Sources: construction sites with failing/erosion control, eroding streambanks, exposed soil)

**Tidal Creek** A saltwater creek that is influenced by tides. Many tidal creeks have oyster reefs along their shorelines.

**Turbidity** A cloudy condition in water caused by suspended sediment.

**Watershed** An area of land that drains into a specific body of water, such as a creek, lake, or river.

### Water Classifications

The NC Division of Water Resources applies classifications to waterways which define the best uses to be protected within those waters (e.g. swimming, fishing, drinking water supply, aquatic life). These classifications have an associated set of water quality standards to protect their designated uses. These standards may be designed to protect water quality, fish and wildlife, the free flowing nature of a stream, or other special characteristics. In addition, there may be a **supplemental classification** applied to protect several different uses or special

characteristics within the same waterbody. Listed below are the freshwater and saltwater classifications that apply to Wilmington's waterways. For more information, visit: <https://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/water-resources/planning/classification-standards/classifications>

### **Freshwater Classifications**

**Class C** Waters protected for secondary recreation (fishing, boating, and other activities involving minimal and infrequent skin contact), wildlife, agriculture, biological integrity, and fish/aquatic life propagation and survival.

### **Supplemental Classification**

**Swamp Waters (Sw)** Waters that naturally have low flow and other characteristics which differ from creeks that drain land with steeper topography.

### **Saltwater Classifications**

**Class SC** Saltwaters protected for secondary recreation (fishing, boating, and other activities involving minimal skin contact), fish and noncommercial shellfish consumption, fish/aquatic life propagation and survival, and wildlife.

**Class SB** Saltwaters used for primary recreation, such as swimming, and all Class SC uses.

**Class SA** Saltwaters used for commercial shellfishing and all Class SC/SB uses. SA waters are also High Quality Waters (HQW) by supplemental classification.

### **Supplemental Classifications**

**High Quality Waters (HQW)** Waters rated excellent based on biological, physical, and chemical characteristics and having primary or functional nursery areas.

### **Outstanding Resource Waters (ORW)**

Unique and special waters having excellent water quality and being of exceptional state or national ecological or recreational significance.

### **State Status/Reason**

Indicates whether or not a creek is supporting its state classification/use and the reason why.

### **NC 303(d) List of Impaired Waters**

Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act requires states to develop and frequently update a list of waters that do not meet water quality standards or have impaired uses. This newsletter is based on the NC 303(d) List, which is available for viewing at:

<https://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/water-resources/water-planning/modeling-assessment/water-quality-data-assessment/integrated-report-files>

Unfortunately, several of Wilmington's waterways are on the 303(d) list because of pollution, such as bacteria and nutrients, which is washed from the land by stormwater runoff.



*Cape Fear River*

## **Watersheds that drain to the Cape Fear River (CFR)**

### **Smith Creek**

**Size of watershed:** 16,650 acres

**State classification/Use:** C, Sw

**State Status:** Currently supporting use

**Reason:** Meets standards for Class C waters

**UNCW Sampling Summary:** Not sampled due to bridge being under repair.

### **Burnt Mill Creek**

**Size of watershed:** 4,207 acres

**State classification/Use:** C, Sw

**State Status:** Impaired. On NC 303(d) List

**Reason:** Does not meet standards for Class C waters, specifically for biological integrity of benthos (bottom dwelling organisms)

**UNCW Sampling Summary:** The creek entering the Randall Parkway Pond had poor dissolved oxygen levels on three occasions. Exiting the pond showed good dissolved oxygen and low turbidity. Lower Burnt Mill Creek sampled at Princess Place had poor dissolved oxygen levels, low turbidity, and high fecal bacterial counts, and a moderate algal bloom in May 2023.

### **Greenfield Lake**

**Size of watershed:** 2,465 acres

**State classification/Use:** C, Sw

**State Status:** Impaired. On NC 303(d) List

**Reason:** Does not meet standards for Class C waters, specifically for Chlorophyll a

**UNCW Sampling Summary:** The Squash Branch tributary into the lake was severely impacted by low dissolved oxygen levels. The Jumping Run Branch tributary was mildly impacted by low DO. However, both streams suffered from high fecal coliform counts. These tributaries are the main contributors of elevated nitrogen and phosphorus into the lake. The lake suffered from two major algal blooms at one sampling station and another station had issues with low DO.

### **Barnards Creek**

**Size of watershed:** 4,173 acres

**State classification/Use:** C, Sw

**State Status:** Currently supporting use

**Reason:** Meets standards for Class C waters

**UNCW Sampling Summary:** Barnards Creek is sampled at two locations which showed problems with elevated fecal coliform counts and minor issues with low dissolved oxygen.

### **Mott Creek**

**Size of watershed:** 3,342 acres

**State classification/Use:** C, Sw

**State Status:** Currently supporting use

**Reason:** Meets standards for Class C waters

**UNCW Sampling Summary:** Not sampled.



*Intracoastal Waterway*

## **Watersheds that drain to the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW)**

### **Howe Creek**

**Size of watershed:** 3,516 acres

**State classification/Use:** SA, ORW

**State Status:** Impaired. On NC 303(d) List; closed to shellfishing

**Reason:** Does not meet standards for Class SA waters, specifically for fecal coliform bacteria; a portion of Howe Creek is also impaired for dissolved oxygen

**UNCW Sampling Summary:** Not sampled.

### **Bradley Creek**

**Size of watershed:** 4,583 acres

**State classification/Use:** SC, HQW

**State Status:** Currently supporting use

**Reason:** Meets standards for Class SC waters

**UNCW Sampling Summary:** Bradley Creek is sampled at two sites along Wrightsville Avenue and two sites in the upper north branch (Clear Run Branch). One upper stream sampling site was impacted by high fecal coliform, and an algal bloom in February 2023. The two Wrightsville Avenue sampling stations had generally good water quality with elevated turbidity on one occasion.

### **Hewletts Creek**

**Size of watershed:** 7,478 acres

**State classification/Use:** SA, HQW

**State Status:** Impaired. On NC 303(d) List; closed to shellfishing

**Reason:** Does not meet standards for Class SA waters, specifically for fecal coliform bacteria

**UNCW Sampling Summary:** Hewletts Creek did not experience algal blooms or elevated turbidity, and dissolved oxygen was generally good. However, fecal coliform counts were consistently elevated at the station on Pine Grove Road, the middle branch into the creek.

### **Whiskey Creek**

**Size of watershed:** 2,078 acres

**State classification/Use:** SA, HQW

**State Status:** Impaired. On NC 303(d) List; closed to shellfishing

**Reason:** Fecal coliform bacteria

**UNCW Sampling Summary:** Not sampled.

*\*All waters in the State of North Carolina are impaired for mercury, based on high levels found in the tissues of several fish species.*



## **WILLISTON STUDENTS AWARDED FOR INNOVATION AT FUTURE CITY COMPETITION**

Williston Middle's Leadership Club competed in the Regional Future City Competition at NC State in Raleigh on Jan. 20. The middle schoolers won a special award for Most Innovative Transportation System at this year's competition.

The Future City Competition is a middle school STEM program where students work across subjects to showcase their solutions to a city's sustainability issue.

This year's challenge, titled Electrify Your City, required students to create a 100% electrically powered city with energy generated from socially and environmentally friendly resources. Students are tasked with writing an essay, building a physical model of their city, and presenting their vision.

Employees from the city's Planning and Development, Engineering, and Public Services departments mentored and volunteered with the Williston team to offer them support and encouragement throughout the project. ■

