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Wilmington welcomes growth and change with Vision 2020 Plan



The river walk in historic downtown Wilmington (left), as well as the store fronts and restaurants along Front and Water Streets (Roy's Riverboat Landing, right) are just a few of the more scenic places located downtown. The Vision 2020 plan aims to bring all of downtown Wilmington to the same standards.

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NEWS EDITOR

Every popular city in America is celebrated for a signature part of its downtown area, and Wilmington intends to put this formula to use through the Wilmington Vision 2020 plan. Wilmington's Vision 2020 Plan will aim at perking up its already beautiful downtown area while drawing extra attention to where downtown meets the Cape Fear River. Other large cities in the southeastern United States have exclusive areas that attract tourists every year. New Orleans has its French Quarter, Miami has South Beach, Atlanta is home to some of the most



This dilapidated hotel is one of several decrepit areas still visible downtown.

popular bars and clubs in the country, Nashville, Tenn., has its country music scene, and Austin, Texas is known for its popular nightlife as well. Wilmington is bursting with potential and by 2020 it could be put to good use.

The main goals of the 2020 plan include making downtown the most desirable place to live in Wilmington regardless of a person's income, stressing the incorporation of the Cape Fear River into the downtown area for tourists, businesses and residents, and of course making downtown the most attractive part of Wilmington. The 2020 vision statement reads: "In the year 2020, the City of Wilmington, North Carolina will be recognized as one of the eastern seaboard's most livable cities - a leading jewel of the mid-Atlantic region."

The plan realizes that Wilmington

is bursting with potential to be one of the top cities on the east coast and also understands that the city already attracts a steady number of tourists each year thanks to the U.S.S. North Carolina, various festivals and events and most importantly three nearby beaches that are unspoiled and that become heavily populated between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Wilmington's population is also growing rapidly and picking up momentum as the years go by. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Wilmington's population in 1990 was 55,530, in 2000 it was 75,838, and the bureau estimates that Wilmington's 2003 population equaled 91,137. With Wilmington's population and tourism on the rise, the city must also expand physically to accommodate. Vision 2020

understands that there are many parts of downtown that remain currently underway. Some of the other goals listed by the City staff for Wilmington Vision 2020 include: constructing public squares and waterfront parks downtown, utilizing the current empty spaces

-Wilmington Mayor Spence Broadhurst

empty and intends to stimulate growth with new businesses and renovation.

Wilmington Vision 2020 is a collaboration involving Wilmington Downtown, Inc. and EDAW, Inc. along with other public organizations. Wilmington Downtown, Inc. is a group of multiple committees and also the new name of the former DARE, Inc. (Downtown Area Revitalization Effort), EDAW, Inc. is a design firm that specializes in various design and planning efforts including landscape architecture and planning/urban design. The plan was completed in 1997 and is

downtown, stimulating street level activity, improving economic development downtown by increasing downtown jobs, finishing northern downtown's grid pattern, making Front Street a two-way street, widening downtown sidewalks, increasing the number of special events downtown, extending the riverwalk from the Cape Fear Memorial bridge to the Holmes Bridge, promoting the development of housing, providing public spaces for civic and leisure activities, preserving the historical and natural areas of downtown and

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