



The Residents of Old Wilmington, Inc.

## *Neighborhood Messenger*

March 14, 2008

### **Surry St. Rezoning Revised**

Developer River 2 Sea, LLC., Under pressure from the City Council and ROW, has revised its plans for RFMU rezoning of the Surry St. area.

The revision, however, is disappointing to ROW.

- The massiveness of the project is now more pronounced. It project now assaults the adjoining neighborhoods with monolithic blank walls.
- The Rube Goldberg “traffic plan” exacerbates the concerns about traffic on the nearby residential streets. It now forces vehicles to use those streets.
- It fails to agree to perpetual green space on the north side of the bridge. Rather, it reveals the intent to convert the north side to a “transit center” for busses and trolleys.
- The plan clearly reveals the “tunnel” the developer proposes as compliant with the RFMU mandate of unobstructed views of the river down Queen St.
- Queen St. east of Surry becomes a de facto driveway for the project.

In short, although “redesigned”, the new plan demonstrates little progress in confronting and solving the many defects in the development. Uncertainty has been heightened by statements of the developer in its March 4 “public meeting” that contradict the statements on the revised plan submitted just days later. See the plans at [Revision?](#)

In short, ROW opposition continues. The plan will be considered by the Planning Commission on **April 2; 6 pm, City Council Chambers.**

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### **Scenic Byway Plan in Draft**

The draft plan for the Cape Fear Scenic Byway is available for review and comment at [Plan](#).

Members are invited to review the plan and make comments to Kevin O'Grady, ROW's participant on the Steering Committee. E-mail [KOG](#).

## Central Business District Zoning Revision

The Planning Staff's attempt at comprehensive revision of the zoning requirements in the downtown commercial core is under sharp attack by the area's developers. It is time for the Residents to assert their opinions on this revision effort. Read the draft revisions at [CBD](#), (Links are in the right hand column.) .

Member Mike Rogus recently commented on the draft revisions in this e-mail to the staff:

*Ms. Graybeal:*

*I attended the CBD meeting last evening and feel that my opinion was not fairly represented. There were many developers and contractors but too few residents. I am not a developer or a contractor but I am a resident of the downtown area.*

*I fully support the proposed new CBD rules. I feel that they are a reasonable compromise between unrestricted development and ideal planning. I am pro-development but feel that developers must give as well as receive. I want to see development that enhances the character and appearance of Wilmington and does not constitute an eyesore and endless walls of concrete. I would like to address some of the issues I heard at the meeting.*

*The development community does not want any rules, past, present or future. They don't like the old rules anymore than the new rules. They want no restrictions whatsoever, only worshipping mysterious "market" forces, which they failed to define. No one can predict the market. If we could, we'd all be a lot richer than we are. And market forces alone do not always promote good communities. Developers are not being responsible members of the community when they refuse to take long term considerations into their calculations. And following their individual notions of what is or is not "market" has historically led to some big mistakes, mistakes that developers do not have to live with. How many developers actually want to live or work in the projects they build? It is up to city planners and city officials to ensure that wider public interests are taken into account. Developers are a vital partner in a better Wilmington, but they are not the only people involved. Giving up perfectly good planning restrictions and incentives to satisfy the narrow financial interests of what is, after all, only a small portion of the community is not good government.*

*The more air and sun a developer takes away from the community for the*

*project, the more space the developer consumes, the more greenways and people space the developer needs to create to compensate. That to me and to many other people is a fundamental principle. The incentives the city offers to build higher or denser are reasonable. If anything, they don't ask enough.*

*People want to live in a city that is attractive, safe, and full of possibilities and wonder. Developers who throw up ugly, uniform, uninteresting buildings will destroy the very goose that lays the golden egg. People do not want to live in or around buildings that depress the hell out of them. People want color, green, flowers, a view, sunlight.*

*I was part of the "market" two years ago. I had no connection with Wilmington and did not live or work anywhere near NC; I had never been to Wilmington. One of the main reasons that Wilmington got my attention is how attractive the old residential part of the city and waterfront are. However, aside from the RiverWalk, I thought and still think that the downtown business area is ugly, dotted with eyesores like parking garages and flat, square, uninteresting, me-too apartment complexes without any style or uniqueness. Some of the worst offenders are the city and county buildings, CFCC, and the Hilton.*

*I have seen the new Bannerman Station and the pictures of the new WaterView apartments. To me, these buildings do not enhance the city. The city has missed another opportunity to promote something people want to look at and enjoy, a landmark that makes the city stand out. There is not an inch of green space connected to Bannerman and I see nothing for the WaterView. Both of these buildings are bigger than what was there before and both consume large amounts of city space and return nothing to the public.*

*When I was shopping for a home, I looked at renovation projects in the north area of the city. Again, they failed to attract. Ugly buildings, no green space, few local amenities like stores and restaurants. With PPD workers moving in I am sure they will sell, but would anyone want to live there absent a job nearby?*

*The developers have serious reservations about requiring commercial space in the ground floors of their buildings. I agree with them to some extent, more flexibility might be a good idea. However, the city can and should promote commercial businesses that make life better for downtown residents. For example, the downtown has recently lost three stores I used on a daily or weekly basis: a dry cleaners, a bakery, and a drug store. I now must*

*replacement shop at the malls. I used to walk to all three; now I have to drive or use public transportation. The city needs to offer incentives to attract vital services and essential retail businesses to the downtown area, not another boutique or bar. I suggest that the city could offer developers incentives to attract a targeted commercial enterprise that does not exist in the downtown now. Any developer that can obtain a large grocery store (not just a convenience store) should be given special consideration.*

*During the last election the public approved, by a wide margin, bonds for parks and recreation areas. City officials will not lose public support by requiring developers to enhance their projects with greenways, small parks, fountains, or other public amenities. The city planners have the right idea; it's now up to city officials to support those modest and reasonable efforts.*

*Thank you.*

*Michael P. Rogus*

**Consider these questions when reviewing the draft regulations:**

1. Will the draft regulations tend to preserve the historic commercial buildings south of Red Cross or will they encourage demolition?
2. Will these regulations provide green space for the future, or continuous concrete?
3. Should parking be required in all new construction? Should the City (its taxpayers) provide the parking for the commercial developers?
4. Do these proposals foster the design characteristics of historic Wilmington?, and
5. All other insights you may have.

E-mail your thoughts to [CBD Regs.](#)

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**NEXT MEMBER MEETING**

**When:** Apr. 9 ; **Time:** 7 p.m.; **Where:** Tileston School, 412 Ann St.

**Speaker:** Maggie O'Conner  
Wilmington Planning Department

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## Annual Tree Awards

Its time to start thinking about your 2008 tree awards nominations, according to Lauren Galleher of The City of Wilmington Tree Award Committee. To nominate click [Trees](#). Nominations are due by April 25.

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## Dates to Remember

**April 4 Planning Commission considers the Surry St. Rezoning**

**April 5 Azalea Pride Cleanup**

**April 9 ROW Member Meeting**

**April 12 Azalea Festival Home Tour**

**April 19 Hands on Wilmington**

**October 4 Back Door Kitchen Tour III**

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## Past *Messengers* on the Web

The ROW webmaster has now placed links to all previous issues of the *Neighborhood Messenger* on the ROW web site ( [www.rowilmington.org](http://www.rowilmington.org) ). You can now catch up on previous issues with a click of your mouse.

## Your Name Here!

Contribute to the *Messenger* and your name could be here, All submissions considered. E-mail or mail to any board member or to [webmaster@rowilmington.org](mailto:webmaster@rowilmington.org)

## A ROW “Meals on Wheels” Team?

At this month's member meeting, Pam Rose suggested that ROW could form a “team” to share a “Meals on Wheels” route. This would spread the commitment to deliver meals to these needy recipients over a group of ROW members, much like we currently spread the community service of alley cleaning.

Let us know if you would be interested in forming/joining such a group. E- Mail [Meals](#)

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## New ROW Board

Per our bylaws, elections were held at our March member meeting. The new officers and directors are:

Kevin O'Grady, President  
Sherry Demas, Vice President  
William Massey, Treasurer  
Patricia Wilson, Secretary  
Alice Mitchell, Past President  
Dan Camacho, Director (Term ending March 2009)  
Randy Shackelford, Director (Term ending March 2009)  
Robert Erb, Director (Term ending March 2010)  
Paul Lawler, Director (Term ending March 2010)

ROW thanks departing Director **Herman Smith** for his years of service on the Board !

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## Community Activities

### CONA Election Forum

The Council of Neighborhood Associations will hold a forum for the primary and for the election of School Board Mmbers, District 18 State Representative and County Commissioners:

The CONA Forum for the <b>primary</b> : Wednesday, April 23, 2008 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM UNCW, Warwick Center, Ballroom	The CONA Forum for the <b>elections</b> : Wednesday, October 15, 2008 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM UNCW, Warwick Center, Ballroom
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## Hands on Wilmington

Seeking volunteers for community projects April 19. To volunteer contact Samantha Wood, [swood@ec.rr.com](mailto:swood@ec.rr.com)

## Historic Wilmington Foundation needs tour volunteers



### *Volunteers Needed!*

### *2008 Azalea Festival Home Tour*

**Saturday, April 12 & Sunday, April 13**  
**1:00pm – 6:00pm**

Volunteer Shifts available for both days are:

12:45 – 3:30 pm

3:15 – 6:00 pm

*Docent Training session required week before the event*



Join us this year as a docent in  
one of the beautiful homes on tour  
in historic Wilmington!

Call Aimée to schedule a time convenient for you  
at 762-2511 or e-mail  
[aimee@historicwilmington.org](mailto:aimee@historicwilmington.org)

**Special offer to docents...**  
**buy Home Tour tickets for only \$10.00**  
**(Regular price \$20.00)**