



WILDWOOD CONNECTION

DEMOLITION CLEARS THE WAY FOR DOWNTOWN RAILYARD PROJECT

Demolition began in May on condemned vacant buildings at the corner of Main Street/US 301 and Wonders Street in preparation for what will become approximately 8,000 square feet of new, leasable commercial space.

The preconstruction is among the early phases of the Railyard project, which will include a new, multistory parking garage of about 125 spaces. The Railyard is the first major component in the city's Downtown Master Plan implementation.

"I remember when the intersection of Main Street and State Route 44 was just a stop sign and a couple of two-lane roads," said Mayor Ed Wolf. "We are growing into a city with ever-increasing opportunity and reason for our youth to plant their roots and raise their families right here at home."

Design of the new buildings and parking garage will follow demolition, and is expected to take about six months. Construction details and schedules are anticipated in late 2023 or early in 2024.

Photos at right show the condemned vacant buildings before demolition; below photo shows demolition in progress.



WILDWOOD MOVES FORWARD ON NEW COMMUNITY CENTER

Wildwood’s city commission has approved a contract with OLC Architecture to design a new recreation and outreach center at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park.

Following a conceptual design presentation by OLC’s Maged Elsheikh at the commission’s May 1, 2023, meeting, five citizens in attendance spoke in favor of the project during the meeting’s public forum.

Included were faculty and parents from the Wildwood Middle High School drama club, who described a shortage of space for programs that enrich traditional classroom education.

Elected officials discussed the significant, growing need for such a facility, while raising questions about its capacity related to projected population increases, and its accessibility, security, and cost. Project construction is currently estimated at \$10 million, with a total project cost of approximately \$12 million.

In a split vote, the commission authorized the city manager to develop contract documents for project design.

Mayor Ed Wolf, one of the two dissenting votes on the new outreach and recreation center, issued the following statement after the meeting:

I have no question this facility is intended to serve the community. The concerns I raised this evening were centered around our best path forward, and exercising prudence with taxpayer funds as we take on the largest infrastructure project in Wildwood’s history, our new wastewater treatment plant.

As an educator in Wildwood’s schools for more than a quarter-century, I taught and coached many of the residents in the room tonight, as well as their children, and still regard them as family. I have no doubt that the students and athletes who will use this facility—as well as our seniors and other community members—will benefit from it.

As we proceed, I implore our management team to achieve the vision presented tonight with the same civic responsibility and meticulous attention to detail they demonstrate in other city affairs to ensure this investment does not jeopardize Wildwood’s current and future fiscal health.

At its May 22, 2023, meeting, the commission reviewed and discussed the proposed \$977,850 design contract with OLC Architecture.

Mayor Wolf cited his concerns about the facility’s cost to the taxpayers, including what he calculated to be nearly \$25,000 per week in operational expenses once constructed.

The commission approved the contract in another split vote. Design is estimated to take approximately eight months.



WILDWOOD PLEDGES TO PROTECT MONARCHS

The City of Wildwood has committed to support nationwide efforts to save the monarch butterfly, a candidate for listing on the Endangered Species Act.

A species known and loved by children and adults alike, this iconic orange and black butterfly has seen its population decline in recent years by 90 percent in the eastern United States and 99 percent in the west, according to the National Wildlife Federation. Habitat destruction is considered one of the largest contributing factors.

Joining more than 340 other mayors and heads of local and tribal governments across the country, Mayor Ed Wolf submitted the federation’s Mayors’ Monarch Pledge on April 26, 2023.

“I am pleased and proud to be among 13 fellow Florida mayors taking this step, and hope others will join us,” Mayor Wolf said. “Our city and region are growing in leaps and bounds, bringing enormous opportunity to our residents. But as we grow, we must be mindful of what we already have, including our natural resources, and implement measures to protect these things so we don’t lose them.”

The first-ever Monarch Butterfly Summit was held last June in Washington, D.C., bringing together elected officials, policymakers, and scientists to discuss current research and conservation efforts. The following month, the migratory monarch butterfly was added to IUCN’s Red List of Threatened Species™.

In November 2022, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service shared news that U.S. Naval bases, including those in Delaware, Maryland, and Washington, D.C., are taking steps to monitor and protect monarch populations on military lands. In addition to tagging butterflies to follow their movement and numbers, staff are actively conserving and increasing habitat.

Wildwood’s pledge commits to conservation of monarchs and pollinators through a multifaceted, cross-departmental approach engaging local experts and community members to provide crucial habitat. The city will do the following:

- Engage with city parks and recreation, public works, sustainability, and other relevant staff to identify opportunities to revise and maintain mowing programs and milkweed/native nectar plant planting programs.
- Engage with gardening leaders and partners (e.g., Master Naturalists, Master Gardeners, nature centers, native plant society chapters, other long-standing and influential community leaders) to support monarch butterfly conservation.
- Issue a proclamation to raise awareness about the decline of the monarch butterfly and the species’ need for habitat.
- Plant or maintain a monarch and pollinator-friendly demonstration garden at City Hall or another prominent or culturally significant community location.
- Add or maintain native milkweed and nectar producing plants in community gardens.

More information about these and other efforts will be provided in future issues of the Wildwood Connection newsletter and through the city's social media. Follow us at Facebook.com/WildwoodFlorida to stay up to date.



GOLF CARTS IN WILDWOOD

Golf carts are a way of life—and transportation—for many in the city, particularly in The Villages® sections of Wildwood. An entire network of multimodal pathways provides access to shopping, entertainment, and recreation without the need to use a car, SUV, or truck.

While golf carts may seem like little more than a grown-up toy car, they are legally classified as vehicles and their drivers are subject to vehicle laws and ordinances to ensure the safety of operators, other drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists, and property. Among these are relevant sections of Florida Statutes Chapter 316, including 316.121.

Wildwood's Police Department has seen an increase this year in violations pertaining to speed, driving under the influence, and failure to stop or yield in accordance with posted markings. Officials urge golf cart operators to be alert and responsible at all times.

Drivers are reminded to look for and obey traffic signs and pavement markings, and to be mindful of not only other motorized vehicles, but also bicyclists and pedestrians who share the road/path or may be crossing it.

Operators should never allow a child to drive a golf cart and should never drive while under the influence of legal or illegal substances that may impair physical or mental dexterity, judgement, or reaction time. Owners are encouraged to consider adding seatbelts, windshield wipers, and other safety equipment if available.

"It is important for drivers to understand and follow the rules of the road, regardless of the vehicle they are operating," said Police Chief Randy Parmer. "Our officers will not discriminate when they observe reckless or irresponsible behavior. They will issue a citation if the violation creates an unsafe or potentially unsafe environment."



Golf Cart Safety



Remember:

- Golf carts are legally classified as vehicles.
- Drivers are subject to vehicle laws and ordinances.
- Obey traffic signs and pavement markings.
- Always look for motorized vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians.
- Never allow a child to operate a golf cart.
- Never drive while under the influence.
- Consider seatbelts, wipers, and other safety equipment.

Questions? Contact Wildwood Police at **352-330-1355**.

HURRICANE SEASON BEGINS

Atlantic hurricane season runs June 1 – November 30, 2023.

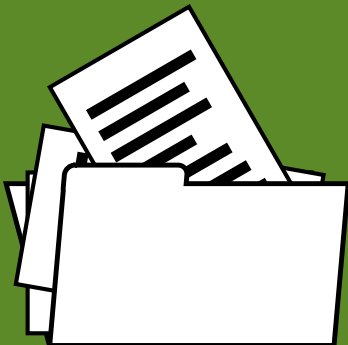
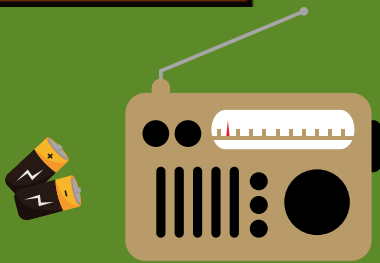
While the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) recommends preparing before the season begins, it's never too late to better protect yourself, your loved ones, and your property.

Florida has two 2023 Disaster Preparedness sales tax holidays. The first runs May 27 – June 9, 2023, and the second runs August 26 – September 8, 2023.

For a list of eligible items, go to floridarevenue.com/taxes/tips/Documents/TIP_23A01-02.pdf.

To learn more about hurricanes and how to make a plan, check out these websites:

- floridadisaster.org/planprepare
- noaa.gov/hurricane-prep
- ready.gov



Recommended Items to Include in a Basic Emergency Supply Kit:

- Water and non-perishable food for several days**
- Extra cell phone battery or charger**
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio that can receive NOAA Weather Radio tone alerts and extra batteries**
- Flashlight and extra batteries**
- First aid kit**
- Whistle to signal for help**
- Dust mask, to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place**
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation**
- Non-sparking wrench or pliers to turn off utilities**
- Can opener (if kit contains canned food)**
- Local maps**



Prepare Your Pets for Disasters

Your pets are important member of your family! This is why they should be included in your family's emergency plan.





To prepare for the unexpected, keep your pets in mind as you follow these tips:

1. Make a plan.
2. Build an emergency kit.
3. Stay informed.

Make a Plan

If you have a plan in place for you and your pets, you will likely encounter less difficulty, stress and worry when you need to make a decision during an emergency.

THINGS TO INCLUDE IN YOUR PLAN:

-  **Know what to do with your pet during an evacuation .** Many public shelters and hotels do not allow pets inside. Know a safe place where you can take your pets before disasters and emergencies happen.
-  **Develop a buddy system.** Plan with neighbors, friends or relatives to make sure that someone is available to care for or evacuate your pets if you are unable to do so.
-  **Have copies of your pet's vaccination record, and make sure your pet is microchipped.** Keep your address and phone number up-to-date and include an emergency contact outside of your immediate area.
-  **Keep contact information for your local emergency management office or animal control office and shelters on hand in case you become separated from your pet.**

Build a Kit for your Pet

Just as you do with your family's emergency supply kit, think first about the basics for survival.

Review your kit regularly to ensure that their contents are fresh.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Code Compliance

June 6, 2023
1:00 p.m.

Local Planning Agency

June 6, 2023
2:00 p.m.

Planning and Zoning

June 6, 2023
2:15 p.m.

City Commission

June 5, 2023 (workshop)
9:00 a.m.

June 12, 2023
9:00 a.m.

June 26, 2023
7:00 p.m.

Project Review Committee

June 13, 2023
10:00 a.m.

General Information

Unless otherwise specified, all meetings are held at City Hall, 100 N. Main St.

Agendas and minutes are posted on the city's website. Go to www.wildwood-fl.gov and click on [Agenda](#).

Meetings are open to the public. Attend in person or remotely by going to the city website and clicking on [Government > Attend a Meeting Virtually](#).

Anyone wishing to speak during Public Forum should submit a comment card before the meeting begins.



A LOOK AT WILDWOOD HISTORY

This photo shows a block on Oxford Street that was destroyed by fire in 1889, except for The Wildwood Inn (at far right).

From the State Library of Florida's general collection.

GROW WITH US: CITY CAREERS

Working for Wildwood is more than just a job. The city offers long-term career opportunities along with a great benefits package.

Leadership regularly reviews compensation plans to ensure they remain competitive and recognize strong performance.

Employees work hard and have fun doing it, in an environment that focuses on superior, friendly service with a strong sense of community.

See current openings and submit a streamlined application at www.wildwood-fl.gov/hr.

STAY UP TO DATE ON CITY HAPPENINGS

You can keep up with Wildwood news and happenings in a variety of ways:

1. Check wildwood-fl.gov for general information.
2. Sign up for **notifications** at wildwood-fl.gov to have news delivered directly to your inbox.
3. Follow us on **Facebook** and get news in your feed:
 - City of Wildwood page: <https://www.facebook.com/WildwoodFlorida>
 - Parks and Recreation Special Events page: <https://www.facebook.com/WildwoodParksRecEvents>
 - Police Department page: <https://www.facebook.com/WildwoodPoliceFL>

CITY INFORMATION

Commission

Ed Wolf
Mayor
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Pamala Harrison-Bivins
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Joe Elliott
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Julian Green
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City Hall

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Directory

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jmchugh@wildwood-fl.gov

Development Services
352-330-1334

Human Resources
352-330-1340

Parks and Recreation
352-461-0134

Police (Non-Emergency)
352-330-1355

Police (Emergency)
911

Public Works
352-330-1343

Utilities
352-330-1336