

INSIGHT

Scott Nunn, Opinion editor
 Submission guidelines: www.starnewsonline.com/opinion



The late Bob Jenkins leads a tour through downtown Wilmington. Jenkins was one of the pioneers of downtown's redevelopment and as a tour guide became one of its biggest promoters. [STARNEWS FILE]

DARE to Dream

In the 1980s and '90s, the work of Downtown Area Revitalization Effort began to pay off, bringing new accomplishments but also new challenges

By Gene Merritt
 For StarNews Media

Second in a series

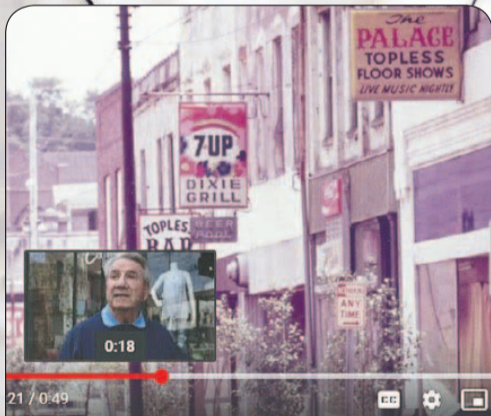
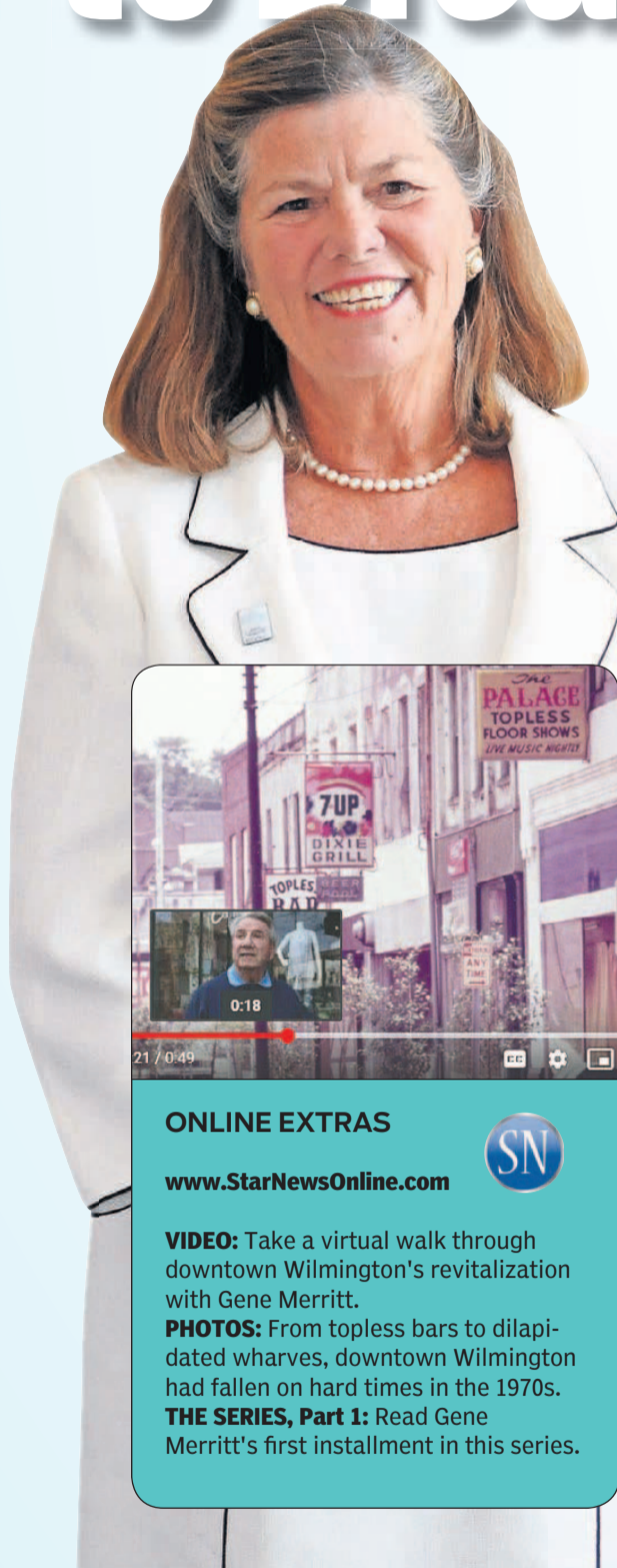
From 1978 until 1982, DARE, Inc., proved to be an effective public-private partnership. The International Downtown Executive's Association recognized us as the prototype downtown revitalization program for small to mid-sized cities in the United States. This was based on our strategy of revitalization through historic preservation. Downtown Wilmington had a strong inventory of historic, architecturally significant structures. We used this to our advantage to secure grants and historic-preservation tax credits.

In the late 1970s, DARE (Downtown Area Revitalization Effort) led efforts to save a dying downtown Wilmington. The unprecedented public-private partnership transformed blocks of empty, rundown buildings into the vibrant downtown we enjoy today. In a series of articles for the StarNews, Gene Merritt — a DARE founder — is recounting how that story unfolded.

In these early days, DARE (now called Wilmington Downtown Inc. or WDI) was able to stem the urban decay and begin revitalization work in earnest. New businesses opened downtown, buildings were renovated, facades were improved.

See DARE, C6

Mary Murchison Gornto served as DARE's executive director from 1982 to 1984. She would later become Wilmington's city manager. [STARNEWS FILE]



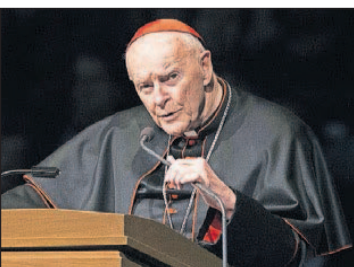
ONLINE EXTRAS

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VIDEO: Take a virtual walk through downtown Wilmington's revitalization with Gene Merritt.
PHOTOS: From topless bars to dilapidated wharves, downtown Wilmington had fallen on hard times in the 1970s.
THE SERIES, Part 1: Read Gene Merritt's first installment in this series.



These buildings on Market Street, between Water and Front, were some of the first to be redeveloped as mixed-use properties, home to both businesses and residences. [CONTRIBUTED PHOTO]



OPINION | C2
LOSS OF FAITH

George Will: Has the Catholic Church committed the worst crime in American history?



OP-ED | C3
PARENTHOOD FAIL

Celia Rivenbark: College-scheme parents must have had zero faith in children's intellect

Wilmington THEATER AWARDS

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