



WILTON MANORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HISTORICAL NOTES

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2020 Wilton Drive

YESTERDAY'S HISTORY IS TODAY'S REALITY

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Wilton Manors Historical Society

Were it not for the farsighted vision of a City Council in 1975, Wilton Manors would not have been able to build its new city hall and police station at its current location on Wilton Drive.

In May 1975, City Council President Sam Stevens reported that the 22,256-square foot Food Fair supermarket at 2020 Wilton Drive was going out of business. The building and its adjacent 4.5 acres were for sale for \$550,000. Stevens urged his nervous colleagues to take steps to purchase the property.

At the time, the prescient Stevens offered the following quote: "Twenty years from now this is going to seem like a good deal we missed, if we miss it now." Stevens further noted that the city's small library was overcrowded and the recreation and police departments would someday need more room. Stevens prevailed, and in 1976 the City of Wilton Manors purchased the property for \$429,426. For many years after its purchase, the "2020 building" was rented out, with revenues going into the General Fund.

In 1997, the City Council approved the creation of the Arts and Entertainment Overlay District in the Wilton Drive area to spur local economic development. In 1998, voters approved a \$3 million bond issue to redevelop and expand Wilton Manors parks, to include a large new community center at Hagen Park and expanded parking there.

By 2000, a majority of the City Council gave approval to the city staff to pursue negotiations with a private developer desiring to purchase some 1.6 acres of city property along Wilton Drive for \$700,000. This led to a campaign by private citizens to thwart the City Council initiative to sell public land; and a majority of the City Council changed its position. By 2003, the 2020 building was torn down and, with sizable grant aid, a large parking lot was built along Wilton Drive to serve both Hagen Park and businesses in the area.

In 2006, Wilton Manors voters approved a \$6 million bond issue for a new city hall and police station. Originally to be built on the corner of NE 21st Court and Wilton Drive, the location for the new government center was switched to 2020 Wilton Drive. Fortunately, the city still owned the land on which the new facility could be constructed. Will today's elected officials and attentive public have the vision to plan for the city's needs two and three decades into the future?

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