

## Office of the Governor

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### NEWS RELEASE

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RELEASE: March 10, 1999

### **Governor Whitman Unveils Plan to Clean Up Camden's Admiral Wilson Boulevard**

Amid the empty lots, abandoned buildings and decaying businesses, Gov. Christie Whitman today announced the state's commitment to a public/private project to transform blighted Admiral Wilson Boulevard (Route 30), in Camden and Pennsauken, into one of the most attractive gateways into New Jersey.

"Last year when I unveiled my transportation vision for the 21st century, I said that transportation could no longer be seen as just a way to get from here to there," said Gov. Whitman. "Transportation is really a component to our overall quality of life and a means by which we can revitalize and stimulate economic growth in our communities."

"Unfortunately, the legacy of Admiral Wilson's road is not one in which he would be proud. One of the most heavily traveled roads in and out of the state should reflect the pride we feel for New Jersey." said the Governor. "The gateway project is comprised of three components-open space preservation, urban redevelopment and transportation-coming together through public and private sector leadership to improve the self-image and economy of the community, region and state."

Transportation Commissioner James Weinstein explained the state's commitment to the gateway project will consist of a multi-agency effort involving NJDOT, the Delaware River Port Authority (DRPA), the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs. The first phase of the project will involve making improvements to the highway, including landscaping, litter pickup, signing upgrades, painting pedestrian overpasses, new street lighting and paving.

"County and city officials and regional businesses have for some time been working on a design concept to restore Admiral Wilson Boulevard to its origins as a beautiful tree-lined thoroughfare. A rejuvenated highway corridor would welcome visitors and travelers to New Jersey in a way that promotes all of our interests, attracts business and improves the quality of life for the community," Weinstein said.

Weinstein said leaders in the public sector ---including Assembly Speaker Jack Collins, Camden County Freeholder Director Jeffrey Nash, Camden Mayor Milton Milan, Pennsauken Mayor Robert Cummings and DRPA Vice Chairman Glenn Paulsen --- have been working closely with representatives from the private sector --- lead by Vernon Hill, chairman of Commerce Bank and Dan Martin, publisher of the Courier Post --- to conceptualize and implement a project that would create a better impression of the state for visitors and serve as a catalyst for reinvestment in the city and the surrounding area.

"The 'Gateway to New Jersey', as the Admiral Wilson Boulevard is often called, has a tarnished image which leads to an unfavorable perception of this region. To some, perception is reality. In this particular case, perception discourages visitors, businesses and people from enjoying New Jersey," said Assembly Speaker Jack Collins. "We do not want perception to become reality in this case. We are committed to rebuilding this area and restoring pride in 'The Gateway to New Jersey'."

"DEP is committed to keeping the 'Garden' in the Garden State. This project along Admiral Wilson Boulevard complements the state's landmark open space, urban redevelopment and brownfields initiatives, and will serve as a cornerstone for urban revitalization efforts in this corridor," said state Environmental Protection Commissioner Bob Shinn. "In partnership with other state agencies, DEP will continue to assist in the reclamation of our waterfronts and our brownfields and in the development of greenways and urban parks."

"The investment in Admiral Wilson Boulevard is part of the state's continuing commitment to the City of Camden and its citizens," said state Community Affairs Commissioner Jane M. Kenny. "We're confident that the improvements made to this key artery will increase the lifeblood of commerce to the city, generating new economic activity and revenue."

The New Jersey Department of Transportation will commit up to \$15 million to fund initial roadway improvements while the DRPA has pledged \$30 million for property acquisition and demolition work. Additional sources of funding for other work will be identified later.

DEP has provided Green Acres money for nearby Poets Plaza, the Children's Garden and Wiggins Park, and for the connecting greenway to the Cooper River Park. DEP also provided oversight in the remediation of contaminated soils as part of the redevelopment of the waterfront, and will provide similar oversight for the proposed gateway initiative.

The elements of the gateway project include:

- Removing all businesses on the south side of the highway between the road and the Cooper River. Cleaning up debris along the riverbank.
- Creating a park-like setting or "greenway" that is linked to the Camden park system and nine-mile Camden Greenway project.
- Removing the overhead utilities and billboards that obstruct the view of the greenway.
- Improving the roadway appearance.
- Acquiring and demolishing buildings of little or no value along the corridor to create economic redevelopment opportunities.