

TOWN of NORTH WILKESBORO



Photo courtesy of
Wilkes Soil & Water
Conservation District



February 2026

TOWN HALL 832 MAIN STREET, NORTH WILKESBORO, NC 28659
WWW.NORTH-WILKESBORO.COM 336-667-7129

Updates

North Wilkesboro was awarded \$1,936,412.60 in grant funds from the Helene Local Government Capital Grant Program for the Yadkin River Greenway Slope Stabilization.

Following a recent evaluation by the State Fire Marshal, the North Wilkesboro Fire District's insurance classification has improved from Class 4 to Class 3, effective April 2026. This change reflects enhanced fire protection capabilities and may positively impact local property insurance premiums.



To mark the 250th anniversary of the United States, Mayor Randy Huffman and the Board of Commissioners have officially proclaimed 2026 as the "Year of America 250" in North Wilkesboro, inviting all residents to participate in a year-long celebration of our nation's history and our community's shared values.

Upcoming Meeting Schedule

Board of Commissioners

Feb 3 at 5:30

Feb 26 at 5:30

Planning Board

Feb 12 at 5:30

Meetings are held in the Board of Commissioners Meeting Room located at 210 9th Street, North Wilkesboro.

January meetings available for viewing on www.north-wilkesboro.com/AgendaCenter

Upcoming Recycling Schedule

Check your calendars!

Recycling is collected every other week, on the same day as trash collection.

February

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

March

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

April

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

HOLIDAY CLOSURES: 4/3 Good Friday

Independence and Innovation: The History and Future of Forester's Nu-Way

Written by Alyssa Billings
January 2026

From its grand opening in May 1928 until its pumps went quiet in the late 2000s, Forester's Nu-Way wasn't just a place to refuel a car; it was an epicenter of social, political, and even zoological life in Wilkes County. With a current remodel project unearthing stories of its history, the station stands as a reminder of community and entrepreneurial spirit.

New Beginnings

When Independent Oil owner Floyd C. "Tom" Forester opened the Nu-Way in 1928, he wasn't just opening a gas station; he was debuting one of NC's first modern gasoline dispensing companies. On the corner of Cherry and Tenth Streets, the station was open 24/7 and was recognizable by its signature "Royal Blue" gasoline. It served as a full-service provider for the region, supplying everything from home-heating kerosene to industrial lubricants to local manufacturing companies. The station provided more than fuel and vehicle services. Before the era of modern refrigeration, the Nu-Way operated an ice wagon. A milk distribution center and Forester's beverage (a Schlitz beer distribution center) sat near the station. The station even sold snacks and ice cream.

The Social Hub

Beyond being "one of the most widely known independent petroleum products dealers in the south," Forester's Nu-Way was a thriving hub for the community's social, political, and business life (Journal Patriot, December 21, 1939). During the day, the upstairs level handled billing, while the downstairs retail area served the community. Local leaders and politicians would gather to smoke a cigar and play a game of cards - a practice that continued into the 70s. Because it was open 24/7, the station stayed active throughout the night. At two in the morning on a Tuesday, one might enter a room thick with cigarette smoke and bustling with the voices of community members trading coins and knives, making business deals, and enjoying late-night socialization.



Photos provided by Alex Blair.



Lions, Chimpanzees, and Two-Headed Pigs

Forester's Nu-Way was also a draw for families. On Christmas Eve in 1935, Santa Claus gave out treats to more than 3,000 children. An interesting feature that set the Nu-Way station apart was Forester's personal hobby: a private zoo. According to the December 21st, 1939 feature in the Journal-Patriot, what began as a collection of "wild and freak animals" was said to eventually rival professional circuses. Families would gather on Sundays after church to enjoy ice cream and feed peanuts to the myriad of animals housed on the property. Some of the animals living there included African lions, a bobcat from the Smoky Mountains, chimpanzees, porcupines from Maine, Mexican armadillos, black bears, exotic birds, and Chinese dragons. One article even includes the story of a bizarre two-headed, three-eyed pig.

The zoo was a source of local wonder until the historic flood of 1940. During the flood, water rose to the second shingle of the two-story station's roof. Many animals did not survive, and the zoo never reopened.



Moving Forward

Although its days of petroleum and peanuts are over, Forester's Nu-Way will soon be utilized once again. After sitting vacant for several years, the building is now undergoing a remodel and will officially house ODD Roofing's offices beginning in May 2026. In discussing the project, one of the property owners, Alex Blair, explained his vision for the building: "It's not about money, it's about getting this thing open so people will see it and it'll make people smile... This revitalization goes along with the River Arts District [referring to the Downtown and River District Master Plan] and everything the town and the county are trying to do. It's a nice piece of the puzzle, and like I said, I am really excited about it."

Completed work includes improvements to the plumbing and electrical systems, painting, replacing the downstairs windows, and rebuilding the stairs. The balcony structure and roof have remained in good condition. Removing the carpet and wood paneling upstairs revealed hardwood flooring and brick walls. Most of the upstairs window panes are original, as well as one of the doors. Some items retained include desks and one of the original registers. Plans for the building include creating a space on the lower level to honor its past with memorabilia for public enjoyment.

In the modern age, recognizing our history plays an important role in protecting our region's connection with the past, providing a sense of community, and bolstering economic activity. The history of Forester's Nu-Way is a reminder of this community's rich heritage of innovative potential and entrepreneurial spirit.

Sources

The Journal Patriot, December 30, 1935; November 2, 1939; December 21, 1939; May 29, 1941.

Interviews: Alex Blair, Property Shareholder; Cy Brame, Property Shareholder; Kari Romer, ODD Roofing

For the full article and additional photos, visit north-wilkesboro.com.