

BUSINESS ADVOCATE

Jim and Will Wilson are carrying on their father's legacy of business integrity and entrepreneurship while diversifying the company's focus and assets.

VOLUME 13 ISSUE 5

*A publication of the
Business Council
of Alabama*



MEET THE WILSONS

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WILSON BROTHERS FORGE A NEW PATH WHILE STAYING TRUE TO THEIR FOUNDATION



Montgomery-based Jim Wilson & Associates (JWA) takes a lot of pride in carrying on an exemplary legacy of success, generosity, and civic leadership.

However, the family business' other hallmark - innovation - is seeing the company itself not only evolve and adapt with the times, but also help communities across the state of Alabama be on the cutting-edge of the 21st century economy.

Founded in 1975 by the late Jim Wilson, Jr. as a real estate company specializing in shopping mall developments, JWA is currently run by his sons, Jim Wilson, III, and Will Wilson.

JWA now considers itself a diversified investment and real estate services firm. Using the knowledge and experience gained through four decades of structuring ventures and moving real estate through every development stage, JWA brings its expertise to strategic investments in addition to its established base of real estate operations.

Jim and Will explained that

the market has long affected how the company operates; for example, consumer demand led to the transition over the years from traditional shopping malls like JWA's former Riverchase Galleria prop-

erty in Hoover to outlet malls or "lifestyle centers" like Eastchase in Montgomery. Yet, the COVID-19 pandemic ignited a transition away from brick-and-mortar real estate ventures at an unprecedented,

breakneck pace. "What we were and what we are now are two different things," said Jim.

"Things change," he added, explaining that JWA once had to provide the funding to develop a Walmart store in the 1980's because Walmart had no capital of its own at the time.

"YOU TRY NOT TO LEAVE ANYTHING ON THE TABLE, BE SMART, BUT YOUR HANDSHAKE IS YOUR BOND. IF YOU CAN'T TRUST YOUR HANDSHAKE, THEN THERE'S NO REASON FOR US TO DO BUSINESS TOGETHER."

The past few years have seen JWA restructure their entire company and move into the venture capital space, funding promising startups and other early-stage companies. Jim and Will view these capital investments as "investing in people" - an especially apt



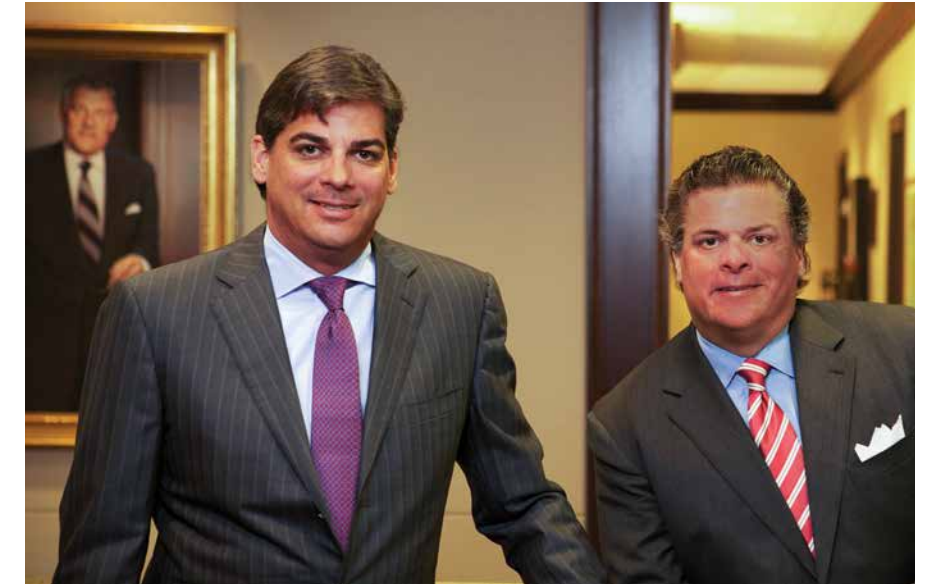
outlook given JWA's storied history of doing just that in every corner of Alabama.

Jim Wilson, Jr. left behind a legacy of hard work and integrity. His insistence on doing things the right way every day continues to guide JWA, his sons stress, just as his love and enthusiasm for the work - and the people who worked with him - continues to inspire them. He exemplified character, commitment, and friendship; the latter living on, for example, in one of Jim and Will's key tenets: if we don't want to have dinner with you, we won't do business with you.

Generosity was certainly one of Jim Wilson, Jr.'s foremost qualities, as well. Many arts and education institutions benefited from his philanthropic commitment and engagement. Today, his sons continue to proudly honor and build upon this legacy through their support of, leadership in, and vision for various organizations and projects in their home state.

This tradition of giving is a hallmark of the JWA culture, they emphasize. And, between their business ventures and their civic endeavors, Jim and Will are at the forefront of some of the most important work being done for the state of Alabama's present and future.

This includes Jim's renowned service on the University of Alabama System board of



trustees and his integral support of historic projects across the System's footprint, including the ongoing construction of a world-class genomics facility at UAB that will place the university at the precipice of global precision medicine.

Take, for example, Will's leadership with the planned intermodal port facility in Montgomery - a project that will link inland shippers around Central Alabama with the Port of Mobile. Montgomery Mayor Steven Reed has hailed this as "a transformational project that allows us to be a Global Gateway, for more commerce, cargo, logistics, digital infrastructure, as well as our automotive industry."

Any overview of Alabama's modern economic growth would be incomplete without examining the Huntsville area's boon - and, of course, JWA is right in the thick of the Rocket City's ascent.

A cornerstone project of JWA is the Redstone Gateway, a massive (and still growing) joint-venture with Corporate Office Properties Trust located behind the gate on Redstone Arsenal. Through that project, JWA supports leading tenants in the extended aerospace and defense community, from federal governmental entities like NASA, the FBI, and the Missile Defense Agency, to some of the biggest private sector partners around, such as The

LEFT PAGE

The beautiful Wynlakes Golf & Country Club and its surrounding planned community continue to be one of JWA's crown jewels.

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Left: JWA continues to offer diversified real estate services across retail, office, residential, industrial, hospitality, and gaming sectors.

Right: Will Wilson (left) and Jim Wilson, III (right) are proud to continue their father's legacy through JWA.

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Left: New Park Market Place is a planned neighborhood center in one of the fastest growing areas of Montgomery.

Right: The Redstone Gateway development in Huntsville houses some of our nation's most important defense and aerospace contributions.



Boeing Company. JWA hopes to soon add Space Command to that list, too.

Even amid its involvement in some of the most important economic projects in Alabama's history, JWA does not lose sight of its core principles, and it does not stray from its family culture.

"We still pray together, we cry together," Jim remarked.

Many of JWA's longtime team members still wear a bracelet that reads, "What would JW do?"

"That means that you take the high road and you treat everybody with respect – but you try to make the best deal you can," Jim advised.

"You try not to leave anything on the table, be smart, but your handshake is your bond," Will added. "If you can't trust your handshake, then there's no reason for us to do business together. And there's no reason to do business with me if you can't trust me."

Going forward, Jim and Will see the potential for another generation of JWA being Wilson family-led.

"I've got a couple of boys, Jim's got girls," Will noted. "We don't know what they will do, but we hope (at least) one of them will come back and [help lead JWA into the future]."

Supporting and giving back to the communities in which JWA does business has always been a family business, as well.

"If you don't invest in where you live or what you're passionate about, why are you there?" Will questioned.

"You give more, you see it come back 10-fold," he said. "We're firm believers in that you have to give back to the community that's given you something to have an

opportunity to go forward... It's very important, and it's something that you can't lose focus of. Without giving back to your community or giving to your church or giving to the YMCA, whatever your passion is, you're kind of lost. And you have to take a hands-on approach to all of this. A lot of people can write a check. But it takes time and effort for you personally to get involved in things and help try to drive a cause."

This community-mindedness will continue to march on as long as JWA exists, as will the company keeping an eye out for the latest opportunities for strategic growth and investment.

You can learn more about Jim Wilson & Associates at www.JWAcompanies.com. **BA**

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