CITY OF DURHAM | DURHAM COUNTY
NORTH CAROLINA

HISTORIC LANDMARK REPORT

Meeting Date: October 15, 2012

Case	LD1200001	**Jurisdiction**	City
Project Name	Greystone		
Request	Historic Landmark Designation		
Site Characteristics	**Tier**	Urban	
	Site Acreage	3.094	
	Existing Use	Inn and Conference Center	
	Date Constructed	1906-1910	
	National Register District	Morehead Hill	
	National Register Individually Listed	Yes	
	Local District	Morehead Hill	
Applicant	Leslie Jones Brame	**Submittal Date**	March 22, 2012
Owner	Greystone Inn & Conference Center LLC		
Address	618 Morehead Avenue		
Location	Northeast corner of Vickers Avenue and Morehead Avenue		
PIN(s)	0821-11-66-2049		
Recommendations	**Staff**	Approval	
	Historic Preservation Commission	Approval	

A. Summary

The Applicant, Leslie Jones Brame, is requesting that the City designate Greystone, exterior and land, as a Durham Historic Landmark. The structure is listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places and is in the Morehead Hill Local Historic District and National Register Historic District.

B. Historical Context

Greystone was built for James Edward Stagg and Mary Washington Lyon Stagg, both descendants of the philanthropic Duke family. The Staggs began building

their home in 1906. The dressed limestone found at Greystone, Duke Memorial United Methodist Church, and the East Campus of Duke University all comes from the Greystone Rock Quarry of Vance County that was owned by Mr. Stagg. Thus, his home received the name "Greystone." Greystone was completed in 1910, in time for its first historic event: a holiday tea honoring the coronation of Duke University President, William P. Few.

James Stagg was the nephew of Doctor Bartlett Durham, after whom Durham was named. Mary Lyon Stagg was Washington Duke's granddaughter. After graduating from Guilford College in Greensboro, James Stagg served as private secretary to Col. A. B. Andrews for twelve years, and then to his cousin Benjamin N. Duke. He also served as a trustee for Trinity College. An officer of the Durham-Southern Railway, the Erwin and Pearl cotton mills, the Fidelity Bank, and the Union Station Company, Stagg built his mansion during the prosperous times of Durham's tobacco success. Thus, at the time it was constructed, Greystone was considered a modest mansion.

Greystone between 1910-1915

Both Staggs contributed generously to the community. Mary donated the hand-carved chancel rail at Trinity Church to honor her mother, financed the carillon programs at Duke Memorial Methodist Church, and was one of the largest donors to the Washington Duke Hotel. In 1930 Mary built Spruce Pine Lodge on Lake Michie which was acquired by the City of Durham in 1950. The chimes in Duke Memorial Methodist Church, where Mr. Stagg served as steward and trustee, were donated by the Staggs.

Just five years after the house was completed, Mr. Stagg became ill during a trip to New York with his cousin Benjamin Duke and did not survive. After her husband's death in 1915, Mrs. Stagg remained in the house and raised their three children, James, Jr., Elizabeth, and Mary. After James Stagg, Jr., died in a car accident, the youngest daughter Mary moved into Greystone with her husband, Sterling Nicholson, to help her mother grieve. The young couple remained there, raising their five children, Sterling Jr., Mary, William Henry, Elizabeth, and Frances in the home. Following Mary's death in 1945, the children divided the furniture, fixtures and other appointments of the home. The house was split into eight apartments in 1961.

C. Architectural Description

Charlotte architect Charles C. Hook designed Greystone in the Chateauesque Style. Greystone is characterized by the combination of the irregular form and varied roofline with neoclassical details typical of Sixteenth Century French chateaux. The central portion of the front facade of the house is symmetrical in design, while the other facades are asymmetrical and irregular, employing the use of a curvilinear tower and hexagonal wing on the north facade. Large elongated vertical windows in one-over-one treatment are found throughout the structure. A dramatic porch extends across the main facade, and boasts piers of cut stone blocks, a denticulated cornice, a balustrade, and heart pine floors complete with floor scuppers. The foundation consists of ashlar stone blocks and drops dramatically as the lot slopes downwards on the north and east elevations of the building. A raised basement is featured on the northeast facade with an extended wing supported by columns constructed of yellow brick. A clay-tiled hipped roof with curvilinear parapets and a series of dormers and five prominent chimneys crown the structure. The grounds, which now constitute three acres as compared to the original six, were originally landscaped by Nello Teer.

East Elevation

North Elevation

South Elevation

Port Cochere Southwest Corner

West Elevation

Behind the house to the north is a low-lying one-story guest house constructed of the same yellow brick found on the house. Built around the same time as Greystone to be used as a carriage house, it was later updated and modernized in the 1960s when it was discovered that the wooden beams supporting the roof were rotten. As such, the building features modern windows and a flat roof installed in the 1960s.

The same master carpenters from the Boston firm of Irvin & Casson, who also made the ornamentations of Duke Chapel and the John Sprunt Hill House, created the Georgian Revival woodwork of Greystone's interior. The detailed woodwork is executed in Tiger Oak, Italian Walnut and Mahogany. Denticulated cornices, plaster medallions, and egg and dart moldings, and ornamented ceilings and cornices exist throughout the house. Doorways are framed by Doric fluted

pilasters throughout. The furnishings were also commissioned from Irving & Casson.

Fluted Columns with Moldings

Stairhall Scrollwork and Balusters

D. Alterations and Condition of Structures

The building is in excellent condition inside and out and retains much of its original appearance and details. In 1961, the building was divided into apartments and remained that way for thirty-five years. Beginning in 1996, rehabilitation of the structure was undertaken: the wood was stripped to its original finish, and newer walls, kitchens, and bathrooms that had been added were removed. Greystone was essentially restored to its original floor plan with only three changes. The kitchen layout was changed slightly. The former sleeping porch was enclosed as a sunroom. The attic space was finished for use as an apartment and office.

E. Criteria for Landmark Designation

The Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), Section 3.17.4 Designation of an Historic Landmark, includes the following criteria to qualify for the landmark designation:

> A building, structure, site, area, or object may be considered for designation as an historic landmark only if both of the following criteria are met:
>
> A. The [Historic Preservation] Commission deems and finds that the building, structure, site, area, or object appears individually eligible for listing or is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places;

B. The Commission deems and finds that the property is of special significance in terms of its pre-historical, historical, architectural or cultural importance, and possesses integrity of design, setting, materials, feeling and association.

F. Fiscal Impact

The Historic Landmark program is a way to protect historically important properties throughout the City and County. North Carolina General Statute 105-278 provides that taxes are reduced by 50% on such properties, to take into account the extra costs associated with restoring, preserving and maintaining historic structures. The reduction occurs upon designation of the property as a landmark. The tax reduction may be lost in the event of a change in the ordinance or a change in the property that causes the property to lose its historic significance. In that event, the tax reduction amount for the year in which the status was lost and for the three previous years become payable, with interest. The property tax reduction represents 50% of the assessed value of the landmark. The current assessment (land and structures) of the property is $1,832,482. Once designated as a landmark the taxable value would be reduced to $916,241. This would result in a loss of tax revenues for the City and County of $5,200 and $6,820, respectively.

G. Notification

Staff certifies that notification, including newspaper advertisements and letters to adjacent property owners, has been carried out in accordance with Section 3.2.5 of the UDO. In accordance with Section 3.17.4D.1, notice has also been provided to the City and County Managers and their respective Finance Directors. At the request of the County Board of Commissioners, the staff provided a briefing on September 10, 2012 that included the tax implications of designation.

H. Property Significance

Greystone possesses historical, architectural, and cultural importance. Greystone is the last of the grand early Twentieth Century residences in central Durham associated with Durham's industrialists and businessmen. It represents a period of Durham's history that coincided with the economic boom of the tobacco industry. Families associated with the industry constructed large homes to display their wealth. Greystone is the last remaining Chateauesque Style dwelling in Durham, which was once marked by a number of these structures in the early twentieth century. The structure's association with the prominent Stagg family is also culturally significant. The land associated with the property is significant as it enables sweeping views of the property that without protection could be lost, and is an important aspect of the historic setting of the structure.

I. Recommendations

Staff. Greystone is significant in terms of historical association as one of the last standing early-Twentieth Century prominent residence in central Durham, and architectural style for the unique Chateauesque Style of the structure, and retains historical integrity.

The staff has determined that Greystone meets the UDO criteria for Landmark designation. Therefore, staff recommends designation of Greystone (LD1200001), exterior and land only, as a Durham Historic Landmark.

State Historic Preservation Office. In accordance with the UDO, the Staff provided an opportunity for the NC Department of Cultural Resources (the State Historic Preservation Office) to review and comment on this proposed Historic Landmark Designation. The Department stated that, with minor modifications included in this staff report, the designation report provides adequate historical and architectural contexts for the property and that the report provides the Durham Historic Preservation Commission and the Durham City Council with adequate information to determine whether Greystone has the requisite special significance and integrity for landmark designation.

Historic Preservation Commission. The Historic Preservation Commission found that Greystone meets the two criteria for Historic Landmark designation. On August 14, 2012 the Commission voted 8-0 to recommend that the City Council designate Greystone (LD1200001) as a Historic Landmark.

J. Alternatives

As per UDO Section 3.17.4.D.2, the City Council may adopt the ordinance of designation as proposed, adopt the ordinance of designation with any amendments it deems necessary, or reject the proposal.

K. Staff Contact

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L. Attachments

Attachment 1, Context Map
Attachment 2, Application Materials
Attachment 3, Photographs
Attachment 4, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources Letter, July 25, 2012
Attachment 5, Ordinance of Designation