



Durham Appearance Commission

MEMO

Date: **February 20, 2012**

To: Members of the **Joint City County Planning Committee**

From: **Howard Holcomb, Chair, Durham City-County Appearance Commission**

Subject: **2012 Durham City-County Appearance Commission Annual Report**

Introduction. The Durham City-County Appearance Commission is an advisory board whose mission is to enhance and improve the visual quality and aesthetic character of Durham City and County. The Commission consists of members appointed by the City Council and Board of County Commissioners. Commission members vary in their background from architects and landscape architects to other design, development, and real estate professionals, as well as citizens interested in design and appearance issues. The Commission meets the third Wednesday of every month at 5:30 p.m. in Conference Room GA on the ground floor of City Hall. This report provides a summary of the Commission's work in 2012.

General Commission Accomplishments for 2012. One of the Appearance Commission's roles is to provide feedback on the design of major public projects, and private projects as requested by elected officials. Due to the limited number of reviews this year, the full Commission has absorbed this task. With the update to the Durham Comprehensive Plan, approved by the City County on April 16, 2012 and by the Board of Commissioners on May 14, 2012, the Commission no longer is specifically tasked to review major public projects.

In 2012 the Commission reviewed the designs for one project, Y. E. Smith School.

Golden Leaf Awards. The Golden Leaf Awards for Community Appearance recognize both renovated and new businesses, residences, community buildings, parks and open spaces, and people who contribute to improving our community appearance and making our community a more pleasant place to live.

On October 4, 2012, the Durham City-County Appearance Commission, in conjunction with Keep Durham Beautiful (KDB), hosted the Golden Leaf Awards. The Environmental Affairs Board (EAB) continued their sponsorship of the Sustainable Properties category. The volume of nominations and the fiscal sponsorship for the Golden Leaf Awards was lower than in the previous years. The majority of funding was provided by the Planning Department and Keep Durham Beautiful. This year, six projects were honored with the Golden Leaf Award and eight projects received merit awards. The projects are as follows:

Commercial Properties

Golden Leaf Award Winner: Hope Valley Square
Merit Award Winner: Corcoran Street Parking Deck
Merit Award Winner: MotorCo

Small Scale Residential Properties

Golden Leaf Award Winner: 2410 Green St.

Large Scale Residential Properties

Merit Award Winner: Trinity Commons at Erwin

Community Properties

Golden Leaf Award Winner: Sandy Ridge Elementary School
Merit Award Winner: The Leaf at Durham Central Park
Merit Award Winner: Walltown Recreation Center

Sustainable Properties

Golden Leaf Award Winner: ClearSense at 502 Rigsbee St.
Merit Award Winner: Southwest Durham Regional Library

Keep Durham Beautiful Award

Golden Leaf Award Winner: NEEM Burts Bees Community Gardens
Merit Award Winner: Northeast Hills Neighborhood Entry
Merit Award Winner: Scrap Exchange Relocation Project

Landscape and Maintenance

Golden Leaf Award Winner: Charlotte Brody Discovery Garden

Overall Commission Goals for 2013. The Commission aspires to continue to provide design suggestions and general appearance advice on a variety of projects. We seek to advocate good design, in both the private and public sectors, and encourage all projects to consider high quality, innovative design to be an important element in the success of any project.

One of the challenges facing the Commission had been to maintain the membership and to fill the seats designated for design professionals. The Commission recognizes the necessary role of architects, landscape architects and other design and development professionals in providing quality comments on public projects. At the suggestion of the Joint City-County Planning Committee (JCCPC), the Interlocal Agreement was revised in 2008 to assign seats to the professions listed above to ensure a strong and broad base of expertise on the Commission to aid in the successful completion of these reviews. While preference toward these professionals is given, the applicants for open seats do not always possess these qualifications.

The Interlocal Agreement mentioned above was renewed by both the City Council and Board of Commissioners in 2012.

The Commission has decided to focus on advocating for the Central Durham Gateway Plan and to coordinate with the Durham Appearance Advocacy Group (DAAG) and the Durham Convention and Visitor's Bureau (DCVB). A series of appearance related presentations, finalized this year, are envisioned to be given to citizen groups and businesses by members of these three contributing organizations.

In the coming year the Commission will strive to:

- Hold a retreat to set goals and projected accomplishments for 2013 and beyond;
- Campaign for the DAAG to develop funding opportunities for the Central Durham Gateway Plan;
- Pursue concrete achievable projects to enhance the appearance of Durham City and County;
- Present the appearance related presentations, with the DAAG, to various local groups and business leaders;
- Cultivate the Golden Leaf Awards program in collaboration with KDB and the EAB;
- Assist the DCVB to develop a comprehensive way-finding strategy; and
- Continue to meet with representatives of City and County departments in an effort to understand the processes that affect public projects and the visual environment.

The Appearance Commission is looking forward to another productive and fulfilling year serving Durham. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve and better our community.

2012 Durham City County Appearance Commission Members. Olumayowa Alabi, Tonya Battle, Adrian Brown, Desiree Commodore, Eddie Davis, Howard Holcomb (Vice Chair), Natasha Harris Smith, Katherine Jordan (Secretary), Brian Marks, Malissa McLeod, Sharron Mullen, Todd Parrott (Chair), Stacey Poston, Robert Teer, Andrew Smith.

Recommendation. To receive the Annual Report.

Staff Contacts. Anne Kramer, Planning Department Wade Griffin, Planning Department

Attachments. Attachment A: Member Attendance 2012