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 D E S I G N E X C E L L E N C E

## Durham Appearance Commission

### MEMO

Date: January 4, 2016

To: Members of the Durham City Council and Board of County Commissioners

From: David L. Davis, Chair, Durham City-County Appearance Commission

Subject: 2015 Durham City-County Appearance Commission Annual Report

**Introduction.** The Durham City-County Appearance Commission is an advisory board whose mission is to improve the aesthetic character of the City and County of Durham. The Commission members are appointed by both the City Council and Board of County Commissioners. Commission members have a variety of backgrounds including architecture, landscape architecture, interior design, development, and real estate, 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 2015.

**General Commission Accomplishments for 2015.** The commission has dedicated time to several projects this year including the continuation of the Golden Leaf Awards (that recognize and encourage groups affecting the local built environment) as well as making active efforts to align with other agencies and organizations, whether private and public, to coordinate the activities and programs that improve the appearance of Durham City and County. The Golden Leaf Awards are our major effort as a Commission. After having not held the awards in 2011 or 2013, the commission was determined to hold a successful event in 2014. The group worked diligently to make that happen. They spent a significant amount of personal time and effort to hold the first ever online voting for the Golden Leaf Awards followed by the actual ceremony and presentations of recognition artwork.

**Golden Leaf Awards.** The Golden Leaf Awards Program recognizes contributions to the community in the field of design. These awards support the Commission's goal of establishing a process to recognize the achievements and contributions to the community related to appearance and design. The focus of the awards can be any form of building or environmental design including residential, commercial, new or reused community buildings. It can also apply to parks, open spaces, and the people who contribute to improving our community appearance and making our community a more pleasant place to live.

The commission is proud to have set up a successful website to get the word out about the event which has proven invaluable and will be a great tool for any future events. The commission is pleased to be able to hold the GLA's by remaking the way we communicate and interact with participants. The event was held at the Full Frame Theatre in the Historic American Tobacco Campus. The event was well attended and the board received many positive responses to it.

**Overall Commission Goals for 2016.** The Commission plans to continue to hold the Golden Leaf Awards to recognize exemplary design and reuse as well as provide appearance commission input to other commissions and groups active in Durham. We advocate for good design, in both the private and public sectors, and encourage all projects to hold themselves to high standards in creativity, innovation, design and appearance.

One challenge facing the Commission has been maintaining the membership records and populating our roster. However, the commission, the city and county clerk's offices, and planning staff have actively been making corrections to the roster and seeking new members. As a result, the commission, as of this report, is currently seating 12 positions.

In 2016, the Commission intends to continue in implementing the goals set forth in a planning retreat:

- Continue to provide leadership and guidance in matters of area or community design and in the implementation of programs of general community beautification in Durham City and County;
- Work with other groups to find new opportunities to positively influence design. Become an endorsing body for good design in the Durham Community. Create general Design Guidelines for new work in Durham. Members of our Commission have recently started attending meetings of the Joint City|County Planning Commission, DDI, Historic Preservation Council, Preservation Durham, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission, DAAG, and the Environmental Affairs Board, to name a few.
- Provide advice and comment on appearance related text amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance.
- Update and improve the Golden Leaf Awards program in collaboration with KDB, DCVB, Durham City-County Environmental Affairs Board, DAAG as well as other groups involved in appearance related issues. Use the success of our newly created Web-Site and the 60,000 site visitors tracked during the voting for the last Golden Leaf Awards.

The Appearance Commission looks forward to another year helping to make Durham a better and more beautiful place to live and work.

**2016 Durham City | County Appearance Commission Members.** Anne Abney (Secretary), Jessica Braverman, Rick Crawford, David Davis (Chair), Doug Dorney, Jonathan Dupree, Fredrick Jernigan, Teddy Maynor, Michael Miller, Pamela Porter, Jacob Rogers and Ellen Weinstein (Vice-Chair)

**Recommendation.** To receive the Annual Report.

**Staff Contacts.**

Aaron Cain, Interim Planning Department Contact (Late 2015 and Current).

Tom Dawson, Late 2015 Planning Department Contact

Wade Griffin, Early 2015 Planning Department Contact



David L. Davis, Chairman