



# Durham Appearance Commission

*Cultivate visual appeal & recognize the benefits of good design, which enhance quality of life.*

## 2021 Annual Report

**Date:** January 19, 2022

**To:** Durham City Council  
Durham County Board of Commissioners

**From:** Brandt Smith, Chair, Durham City-County Appearance Commission

**Subject:** 2021 Durham City-County Appearance Commission Annual Report

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**Introduction.** The Durham City-County Appearance Commission is an advisory board whose mission is to *cultivate visual appeal and recognize the benefits of good design, which enhance the quality of life for the residents 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, healthcare, and city planning, as well as residents interested in design and appearance issues. The Commission meets the third Wednesday of every month at 6:00 p.m. in Conference Room GA on the ground floor of City Hall. During COVID-19, the Commission has met virtually over Zoom. This report provides a summary of the Commission's work in 2021.

**General Accomplishments for 2021.** The commission had four sub-committees to align our goals for 2021. The committees are Golden Leaf Awards, Design Policy, Digital Outreach, and Education and Engagement. In addition to these four focus areas we continue efforts to align with other agencies and organizations, private and public, to coordinate the activities and programs that improve the appearance of Durham City and County.

**Golden Leaf Awards.** The intent of the Golden Leaf Awards is to recognize new developments, buildings, and landscaping all across Durham County that provide positive attributes to our built environment. The commission maintains the Golden Leaf Awards website ([www.durhamappearance.com](http://www.durhamappearance.com)) where all submittals are displayed and voting for People's Choice awards takes place. Last year, the Golden Leaf Award program saw an increase in support from the community through fundraising contributions. The 2020 Golden Leaf Awards Program had 30 entries in eight categories. The Keep Durham Beautiful Award was announced in conjunction with the Keep Durham Beautiful non-profit, volunteer organization working in partnership with the City of Durham General Services Department and Durham County. Ten awards were announced, but no formal celebration was held, due to COVID-19. All 2020 winners were recognized via City and County news release. For the 2021 Golden Leaf Awards, submissions were extended to January 15, 2022 with the intent of planning a celebration in the Spring of 2022 to recognize 2020 and 2021 winners.

**Design Policy Review.** The primary focus of this committee has been attending ENGAGEDurham outreach events for the new Durham Comprehensive Plan.

**Education and Engagement.** This committee was formed to reach out to the professional design community as well as the community-at-large to engage in discussions about built design issues.

**Digital Outreach.** This committee was formed to enhance the Commission's online presence to promote the Commission's work and publicize events through a variety of networks.

**Overall Commission Goals for 2021-2022.**

- Host the 2021 Golden Leaf Awards in Spring 2022, either virtually or in person if it is safe to do so.
- Host 2 educational events
- Develop and maintain sponsorships
- Build a robust digital outreach platform (e.g. enhanced website, re-tool social media, develop contact list, post blog articles etc.)
- Participate in the development of new Comprehensive Plan
- Update the Interlocal Agreement Between the City of Durham and Durham County Creating a Durham City-County Appearance Commission (expires January 1, 2023).

Due to COVID-19 and impacts on commission members, we are continuing to work on our goals virtually. The Appearance Commission looks forward to another year helping to make Durham a better and more beautiful place to live and work.

**Durham City-County Appearance Commission members (as of 12/31/2021).** Brandt Smith (Chair), Jamie Tindal (Vice-Chair), Jerry Guerrier (Secretary), Dan Harrop, Kai Kelley Jr., Anne Lebo, Lyn McClay, Kera' Robinson, Katina Rogers, Martha Scotford, and Maysieo Tanks.

Sincerely,

**Brandt Smith, Chair**