

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

July 1, 2007 - June 30, 2008

The Raleigh Historic Districts Commission (RHDC) focused on managing its Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) review process, completing backlogged projects, and processing pending designations. Accomplishments include:

- Initiating our Community Conversations lecture series.
- Achieving National Register listing for Fayetteville Street Historic District, making owners eligible for federal and state rehabilitation tax credits to at no cost to the city.
- Completing the Comprehensive Architectural Survey Update evaluating properties built between 1945 - 1965.
- Processing a record 242 COAs during a period with staff vacancies.

Raleigh Historic Districts Commission: The Basics

Established in 1961, the RHDC serves as City Council's official historic preservation advisory body to identify, preserve, protect, and promote Raleigh's historic resources. We administer the program according to state statutes and city code. The commission also performs all the duties required to maintain our federal Certified Local Government status. The commission's design review procedures are recognized nationally as a "best practices" model. Its work is supported by the City Council's annual grant and two full-time preservation planners and one part-time executive director provided through the Department of City Planning.

RHDC consists of twelve volunteers appointed by city council for up to three consecutive two-year terms. It manages its activities through the work of five committees:

- Certificate Of Appropriateness: Conducts quasi-judicial hearings on applications for exterior changes to historic landmarks and within historic overlay districts.
- Research: Evaluates the city's historic resources and recommends designations.
- Public Relations / Education: Performs outreach activities.
- Nomination: Recruits willing and qualified candidates to recommend to Council for appointment to the commission.
- Executive Committee: Coordinates the work of the standing committees.

Our Current Assets

- 133 locally-designated individual properties. Some of those properties are in historic overlay districts, most are not;
- 5 local historic overlay districts;
- 93 National Register of Historic Places individual listings. Many of the locally listed assets are on the National Register, but not all;
- 24 National Register historic districts.

Summary of Activities

This report presents an overview of the commission's performance during the 2007-2008 fiscal year. It has been divided into categories representative of its committee structure, followed by Certified Local Government duties, and finally, other activities.

Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) Committee

During the year, RHDC processed 242 COAs – the greatest number in our 47 year history, compared to 213 for FY 2006-07. The COA Committee took final action on sixty seven (67) Major Work applications and three (3) minor work applications.

▪ COA applications acted on by committee or staff::	<u>242</u>
Minor work applications approved by staff:	<u>172</u>
Minor work applications acted on by the committee:	<u>3</u>
Major work applications acted on by the committee:	<u>67</u>

Of the totals above, the number that were

Approved (with or without conditions):	<u>235</u>
Denied:	<u>3</u>
Deferred to FY 2008-09:	<u>2</u>
Other:	<u>2 **</u>

** 2 applications were approved in part and denied in part.

It should be noted that with only 3 denials recorded for 240 final actions, the committee had a 98.75 percent approval rate.

Other activities of the committee included:

- Two (2) committee decisions were upheld upon appeal to the Board of Adjustment.
- Continued to assist Inspections Department with Demolition by Neglect enforcement.
- Generated \$12,650 for the City in COA application fees.

Research Committee

- Supported model Cemetery Survey in conjunction with RCCP.
- Listed the Fayetteville Street National Register Historic District bringing access to rehabilitation tax credits to property owners at no cost to the city.
- Completed a Comprehensive Architectural Survey Update focusing on properties built between 1945 - 1965

Public Relations/Education Committee

- Community Conversations lecture series – highlighting Comprehensive Plan Update importance and NCOD community dialog – featuring two national authorities:
 - Mayor Joseph Riley of Charleston: “Preservation and Redevelopment of the American City: The Charleston Experience”
 - Adrian Fine of the National Trust for Historic Preservation: “Protecting America’s Historic Neighborhoods: Taming the Teardown Trend”
- Continued developing updated RHDC website for better customer support.

Certified Local Government Duties

- Recommended to the state's National Register Advisory Committee that the following properties meet the criteria for listing on the register (subsequently listed):
 - Fayetteville Street Historic District;
 - City Cemetery;
 - William A. Curtis House;
 - Free Church of the Good Shepherd.

Other Activities

- Encouraged establishment of Specialist for Raleigh at PNC through a seed money, staff involvement and Commissioner involvement
- Encouraged and assisted the establishment of Raleigh City Cemeteries Preservation through startup funding

Challenges seen in 2007-2008 and planned responses for 2008-2009

Staff support / turnover:

The promotion of Dan Becker to division manager in the City Planning Department created a void and an opportunity. While Dan remains very involved with the commission in an executive role, most of his time is spent on broader planning management. This has provided an opportunity to develop new staff members supporting the commission program and allows us to transfer Dan's institutional memory for program continuity.

- Staff turnover in the Planner II position this year compounded the challenge posed by Dan's reduced time. With Tania Tully and Martha Hobbs we now have two very talented full-time staff members who have made an immediate impact.

Threatened Properties of Particular Concern:

- Crabtree Jones House: 3017 Wake Forest Rd.
- Paschal House: 3334 Alamance Dr.
- (former) First Federal Savings & Loan (Garland Jones Building): A significant Mid-Century Modern building that will be demolished by the county as a result of the new judicial complex project.
- Inside the beltline properties in National Register Historic Districts, those on the National Register study list, and properties without local listing: A broad range of properties are threatened by the teardown trend. Particularly threatened districts include: Bloomsbury, Cameron Park, East Raleigh-South Park, Glenwood-Brooklyn, Roanoke Park, Vanguard Park, and West Raleigh.

Threats posed to National Register districts by teardown phenomenon:

The commission applauds the streamlining of the NCOD process and the work being done by the infill study groups.

- The commission will expand its efforts to reach out to and educate the property owners and residents in the National Register historic districts about the value of their properties, rehabilitation tax credit programs, and the benefits and resources available to them should they pursue historic overlay district designation.

Appeals of COA decisions to Board of Adjustment:

The COA Committee had three appeals of its decisions in the last year, one of which questioned the content of the decision, the other two challenged the city on broader grounds. Where the decision is being questioned, the COA Committee has the capacity to defend its decision. Where the authority of city staff or the underlying city code provisions are being challenged we need help. While we have been fortunate to have an attorney on the commission who has been able to informally advise the committee on these appeals, the City cannot and should not rely on this generosity. The City Attorney's office has advised us that they do not have the staff capacity to support the RHDC in these appeals.

- We will have to allocate part of our annual grant from the City toward these legal costs, which will reduce the resources available to us for our core activities. We will monitor these costs and if the appeal trend continues we may need to request additional funds.

Certificates of Appropriateness:

In addition to the increasing volume of COA applications, the complexity of applications has been increasing with more additions and infill; the quality of applications has been declining; all of which has required more staff time. We are hearing concerns from district residents about property owners doing work without a COA. This has resulted in a sharp increase of after-the-fact COA cases.

- In the next year we will be adding tools through updates to our web site to help the public create more complete applications.
- We will step up efforts to increase awareness of the COA requirement for exterior work in local districts through the website and through neighborhood outreach.

Illegal Building Permits:

Of the three appeals active last fiscal year one was the direct result of permitted work done without a COA. We have documented six cases where building permits were issued without a COA during this fiscal year. These building permits were obtained illegally.

- We are working with the Inspections Department to better integrate the COA process in the permitting system to reduce and hopefully eliminate these incidents.

Work Program 2008-2009

Commission / Staff

- Work with Inspections to integrate COA process into permitting procedures
- Add National Register districts and all historic landmarks to GIS to better support citizenry and emergency responders
- Update "Bylaws and Rules of Procedure"

COA Committee

- Constant improvement of the COA process
- City Text Change to coordinate with revised bylaws:

Public Relations / Education Committee

- Continue development of updated Web Site for better customer support
- Host at least two Community Conversations lectures
- Publish Historic Guidesheets in paper and on the web to support heritage tourism
- Guide the designation process to establish the Depot Historic Overlay District

- Education targeted at NR districts on tax incentives and local listing options

Research Committee

- Local and NR listing of recent past
- Act on 1945-1965 Comprehensive Architectural Survey
- Assist in the Latta House Property survey
- Assist as needed in Pope House preservation efforts

Nominations Committee

- Identify and nominate Commissioner Candidates for City Council consideration with the requisite skills to fill the shoes of those rotating off.

Issues on which RHDC Needs City Council's consideration

- Legal Support for appeals to Board of Adjustment from COA decisions
- We need a change in city policy to resolve a conflict between housing enforcement and preservation policy. Housing violation action of last resort is to force demolition. Preservation policy discourages demolition and promotes continued use of historic structures. We will propose revisions to the City Preservation Revolving Loan Fund that would authorize its use by the city to repair such properties and place the costs as a lien.

Commission Membership 2007-2008

City Council has blessed the commission with members who are leaders in their field and authorities on preservation. We could not ask for a more engaged and competent group of commissioners. Current members include a lawyer, two architects, an architectural consultant, a historian, three professional preservationists, a contractor, an educator, a real estate professional, and a community activist.

Two new members began service this year: Marni Vinton (Secretary/ Treasurer) and Barbara Wishy. Continuing members were: Curtis Kasefang (Chair), John Hinshaw (Vice-Chair), Edna Rich Ballentine, Dan Coleman, Steven Cruse, Nick Fountain, Esther Hall, Mary-Ruffin Hanbury, Robert Runyans, Jane Forde.

With gratitude, the RHDC acknowledges the support, interest, and cooperation that it has enjoyed from the City administration and City Council throughout the past year.

Respectfully submitted by the Raleigh Historic Districts Commission, Inc.
February 17, 2009