

2013-14 ANNUAL REPORT

Raleigh Appearance Commission

The Raleigh Appearance Commission is pleased to present its 2013-14 Annual Report and 2014-15 Work Program request.

APPEARANCE TRENDS AND ISSUES:

In its capacity of providing professional critique for proposed development, the Appearance Commission has an opportunity to see recurring patterns in site plan and building design. The Commission has summarized the design issues observed in the past year and has provided recommendations for how they may be addressed.

Trends:

- **School design:** The Commission has reviewed two schools in the past year, and anticipates the review of many more given the growth of Wake County. We recognize that these projects feature challenging sites, programs and budgets.

Commission's recommendation:

The Commission posits that there is room for improvement in the design of these important projects. Access to daylight and meaningful open space are critical for school-age children, and the architecture and entrance sequence of these structures should convey that they are places of learning and creativity. Quality of material and attention to design were lacking in the projects reviewed, and we as a community can and should do better by our children.

- **Multifamily Residential:** The Commission has reviewed a large number of apartment projects over the past year. While very positive in terms of bringing population and density to our urban centers, the quality of the developments should be improved.

Commission's recommendation:

The use of quality materials, detailed focus to the pedestrian experience, and the creation of and connection to meaningful public spaces needs to be further emphasized and more richly addressed.

- **Connection to public realm:** The Commission has reviewed several large-scale projects with little or no street connectivity within the Downtown District. The long frontages of developments without street front activity, amenities or connectivity create gaps in the urban fabric.

Commission's recommendation:

The City should design and implement comprehensive streetscape standards for all downtown districts and enforce codified urban design guidelines in the new UDO. The Commission also encourages a continued collaboration of designers

and developers with the Commission in the form of courtesy reviews of projects. The Commission also welcomes the opportunity to advise the Council on projects and developments with special City interest.

The following sections provide a brief description of the Commission's efforts and activities during the past year, followed by an outline of Work Program items we wish to pursue in the coming fiscal year.

I. DESIGN REVIEW

Among the Commission's chief functions is the review of the landscape and architectural designs of proposed developments. This effort encompasses site plans and also design-based zoning proposals. Additionally, the Commission provides evaluation and input regarding design components of public projects as special reviews requested by Council.

Preliminary Site Plans:

Since last year's report to City Council, the Commission has provided comment on a total of 38 site plans, an increase of 12 plans from the previous year. The site plans can be grouped primarily into institutional facilities, large-scale apartment complexes, and suburban highway commercial development.

Site plans reviewed in the past year have included:

- SP-15-13 Edison Office
- SP-48-12 The L Building
- SP-7-13 The Point at Creedmoor
- SP-19-13 Teen Center
- SP-24-13 Glenwood Place
- SP-15-13 Edison Office-2nd Review
- S-17-13 Wade Ave Townhomes
- SP-30-13 Our Lady of Lourdes
- SP-32-13 Bell View Hotel
- SP-37-13 Sunny Brook Apartments Phase 2
- SP-42-13 Sunshine Building
- S-27-13 The 10 at South Person
- SP-46-13 2600 Glenwood
- SP-55-13 Enterprise Car Sales
- SP-47-13 M8 Middle School
- SP-60-13 Bier Garden
- SP-57-12 Link Apartments
- SP-18-2013 Dillon Supply Warehouse Redevelopment
- SP-20-13 The Lincoln
- SP-13-13 Charter Square
- SP-10-13 Stanhope Center
- SP-45-13 616 Oberlin
- SP-49-13 West II

- SP-53-13 State Auto Care and Used Tires
- SP-2-14 Abbotts Creek Elementary School
- GH-8-13 220 The Saint

City-initiated projects:

- The commission provided comment on the City’s Police Memorial project.

Zoning cases:

- Z-14-13 Six Forks Road

Courtesy site plans reviewed:

The Commission provided applicant-requested courtesy review in advance of site plan submittal for several projects. All three projects incorporated the Commission’s preliminary comments, resulting in a higher level of refinement and contextual design:

- SP-67-11 Edison Apartments
- S-27-13 10 at South Person
- Sp-60-13 Bier Garden

II. DESIGN OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

The Appearance Commission actively pursues public awareness and education initiatives on a variety of fronts focusing on; design, livability and awareness of appearance in Raleigh. This year’s work focused on three initiatives. The following describes the commission’s major public outreach efforts during 2012-13.

- **2013 Sir Walter Raleigh Awards**

Held at the Contemporary Art Museum in October 2013, this year’s Sir Walter Raleigh Awards drew a standing-room only crowd. The event featured live music, an exhibit “Systematic Landscapes” by Maya Lin, and a panel of local design and development leaders (Steve Schuster, Matt Tomasulo, and Blount Williams).

An effort was made to change the format of the presentation to encourage a conversational tone to present ideas of how design has positively impacted the professional and private lives of Raleigh’s many citizens. Our message was to encourage public interaction and participation in the design process.

Fifteen awards were presented to a range of Raleigh projects, reflecting the best in Residential, Sustainable, Commercial, Industrial and Institutional Design as well as Historic Rehabilitation, Volunteer Initiatives and Landscape Conservation. Notable projects that received awards in 2013 were the Hunt Library, the Neuse River Trail from U.S. 401 south to Skycrest Drive, and the AIA NC Center for Architecture and Design.

- **Community Conversation on Design Excellence**

The Commission sponsored a lecture by Kurt Culbertson, CEO of Design Workshop, in collaboration with the Urban Design Center and the NCSU College of Design on March 6th as a kick off to the annual Urban Design Conference. The introduction of the lecture included a brief presentation of the results from a

community survey that highlighted the congruencies between public and professional attitudes toward the state of design in Raleigh. These survey results are attached.

This sponsorship reflects a growing energy and focus on strategic outreach, to raise the public awareness of design and appearance, and their relationship with Raleigh's economic and developmental prowess. We continue to look for opportunities to collaborate with other interests and energies to present timely lectures and presentations aimed at furthering the discussion of design and successful urban development.

We will join with local projects and public spaces to host events and highlight new and existing urban amenities that exemplify the standards and expectations of Raleigh's citizens.

- **Downtown Waste Collection**

The Commission reviewed reports of other Cities' best practices for downtown waste collection. The findings proved that waste and recycling collection is a common problem among cities especially those without alley streets. The Commission met on several occasions with various downtown Raleigh stakeholders, as well as Solid Waste Services staff and Assistant City Manager Dan Howe. As a result of these discussions, the Commission's request for consideration and review of potential downtown trash remediation is attached. The Commission's initial findings suggest that the complex and fully integrated factors that contribute to the effectual collection and storage of waste within the Downtown District warrants further and focused attention. The Commission would like to respectfully suggest that this issue be placed in a Council Committee to further study the feasibility of the remediation and other opportunities that an interdisciplinary approach may present.

A beautiful Raleigh is a healthy Raleigh, and the Commission's ultimate goal is to encourage the use of the public realm by all of Raleigh's citizens through raising the bar for a long-term, high quality, sustainable appearance. The Raleigh Appearance Commission is honored to provide on-going service to the City of Raleigh, and looks forward to engaging with Council, City staff, and the public in 2014-15, to continue to encourage and promote the highest standards of development for the Capital City.

2014-15 WORK PROGRAM

Raleigh Appearance Commission

The Appearance Commission looks forward to continued professional service to the City of Raleigh in the coming year. We stand ready to address any special tasks initiated by the City Council, along with performing our usual duties of development review, engaging in community outreach, and pursuing major initiatives.

I. DESIGN REVIEW

- Preliminary Site Plans and Zoning Cases (old Code)
- Design Alternates (UDO)
- City Initiated Projects & Streetscapes

II. DESIGN OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

- Community Conversation on Design Excellence
The Commission will continue to use design survey results as a guide in planning further lectures, tours, and roundtable discussions to further design excellence.
- Downtown Waste Collection
The Commission stands ready to continue collaboration with City staff as they pursue improvements to the downtown environment, including the solid waste collection system.
- Sir Walter Raleigh Awards update
The Commission is investigating a new vision for the Sir Walter Raleigh Awards, including partnerships, new awards categories, and outreach to new audiences. This year the Commission will be collaborating with the inaugural Hopscotch Design festival for the 2014 awards.

.....

ON-GOING SERVICE

The North Carolina General Statutes [§160A-452(3)] call on appearance commissions “to provide leadership and guidance in matters of area or community design and appearance to individuals, and to public and private organizations, and agencies.” In the coming year, the Raleigh Appearance Commission seeks to continue to serve in that capacity. We assess appearance issues as they relate to active facades, pedestrian connectivity and quality of experience, and pleasing urban form. It is unanimous within our group that sprawling parking lots, strip malls, covered streams, unbridled advertising, inappropriate grade change devices, and car-focused development do not lead to a beautiful city. We want to see more multimodal transportation opportunities, greenways, parks, and sustainable landscaping principles integrated into our urban

fabric and forms. These qualities make for a more beautiful—and livable—city. The Raleigh Appearance Commission stands ready to help make it happen.

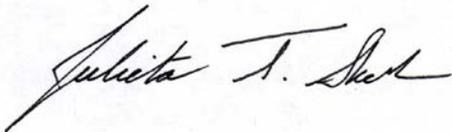
We look forward to our new service to the City Council in the coming year, and eagerly await all tasks assigned.

Thank you for your support,

Members of the Appearance Commission

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bang Thanh Le'.

Bang Thanh Le, AIA
Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julieta T. Sherk'.

Julieta T. Sherk, RLA, ASLA
Vice-Chair

2013 SIR WALTER RALEIGH AWARD WINNERS



AIA NC Center CFaD



AJ Fletcher Foundation HQ



Betty Adams



Capitol Broadcasting



First Presbyterian Church



Polk Hall
Heat Mitigation Garden



Partnership Elementary
Play Area



Neuse River Trail



Murphey School
Landscape Renovations



James B. Hunt, Jr. Library



Salvation Army Center of Hope



Trees Across Raleigh Jr



Wilders Grove SWS Facility



Raleigh City Farm

Raleigh Appearance Commission Downtown Waste Collection: Issues and Opportunities

As part of its 2013-2014 work program, the Appearance Commission undertook a study of downtown commercial curbside waste collection. As downtown grows and thrives, downtown waste collection grows with it. This study identifies the scope of the issue, researching best practices, and bringing forward suggestions for improvements.

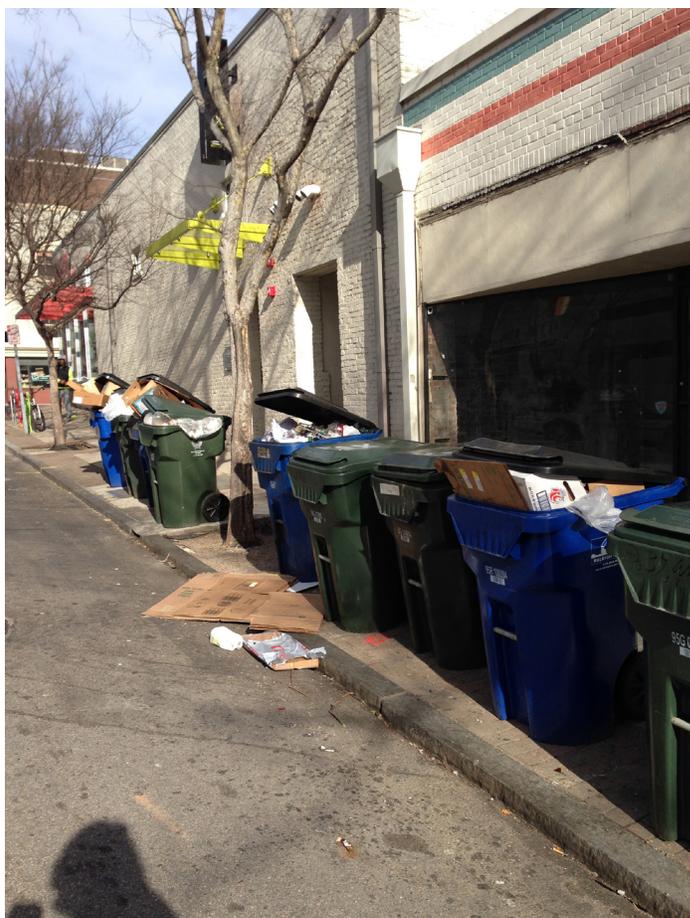
Scope

As downtown revitalizes, new bars, restaurants and businesses open in adaptively reused historic buildings. This added vitality comes with issues, including a lack of space for solid waste and recycling collection. The City of Raleigh Solid Waste Services Department has responded by creating an on-street waste and recycling collection program that serves businesses in the CBD and adjacent PBODs twice a day, up to 7 days a week. This program allows businesses to place their waste curbside for collection, and then store the cans either on site or at the back of the sidewalk at other times of the day. This service is not limited to historic buildings, but is also increasingly utilized by new retail businesses in mixed use projects. As downtown continues to grow, the challenge will not be limited to the historic core but will extend throughout downtown.

While this curbside program is a valuable service to downtown businesses, it creates an environment where our streetscapes are filled with waste containers, and the ensuing noise and smell of pickup. The Commission, upon beginning to examine this issue, recognized that the challenge is broader than just isolated business challenges, and therefore recommends a multi-pronged approach.



Wilmington Street



E. Martin Street

Downtown Trash+Historic Buildings: southeast

While managing trash generated by tenants of older, often historic downtown buildings is not a regional problem, this memo focuses on best practices in the field from southeastern cities. I chose to concentrate on the regional level for two reasons. First, many of the seemingly mundane considerations that communities need to make when managing their trash depend on climate--hot, humid trash is a different public nuisance than wet, rainy trash or cold, snowbound trash. Second, while places like Seattle, Portland, and San Francisco have exemplary trash management schemes, the geographic and demographic contexts of those cities makes it difficult to transfer their experiences to Raleigh. So, after communicating with urban designers and local officials in four comparable southeastern cities, I hope to present a set of relevant, realistic analogues for Raleigh. Analysis from other regions will follow this report.

Nashville: Ron Yearwood and Stephanie McCullough, Nashville Civic Design Center

use of alleys•no trash compactors•special downtown trash collection that happens at night and non-peak hours, “to prevent any sidewalk+street blockages during daily peak hours”•many historic buildings utilize a private trash collector

Charlottesville: Craig Fabio, zoning inspector, Steve Lawson, Public Services
use of alleys; “if the alley owners stop allowing storage, we’re in trouble”•key parking spaces reserved for trash collection at certain times of day•some businesses have to haul trash up to a mile•“constant monitoring [daily] is required”

Savannah: Joe Shearhouse, citizens office, Jimmy Rhodes, sanitation department

use of alleys•centralized trash compactors for businesses and residences (not solar)•weekly or bi-weekly pickups from compactors•off-peak pickups chemical spray•experimenting with custom “historic” trash can designs •trash and recycling programs are effectively separate



Charleston: Dan Riccio, Livability Division

use of alleys•new ordinance currently in front of City Council is expected to pass at next council meeting•trash and recycling containers “shall be stored at a location on a premise so that they are not visible from the right-of-way that fronts the premise”•citable offense•citywide, not limited to historic downtown

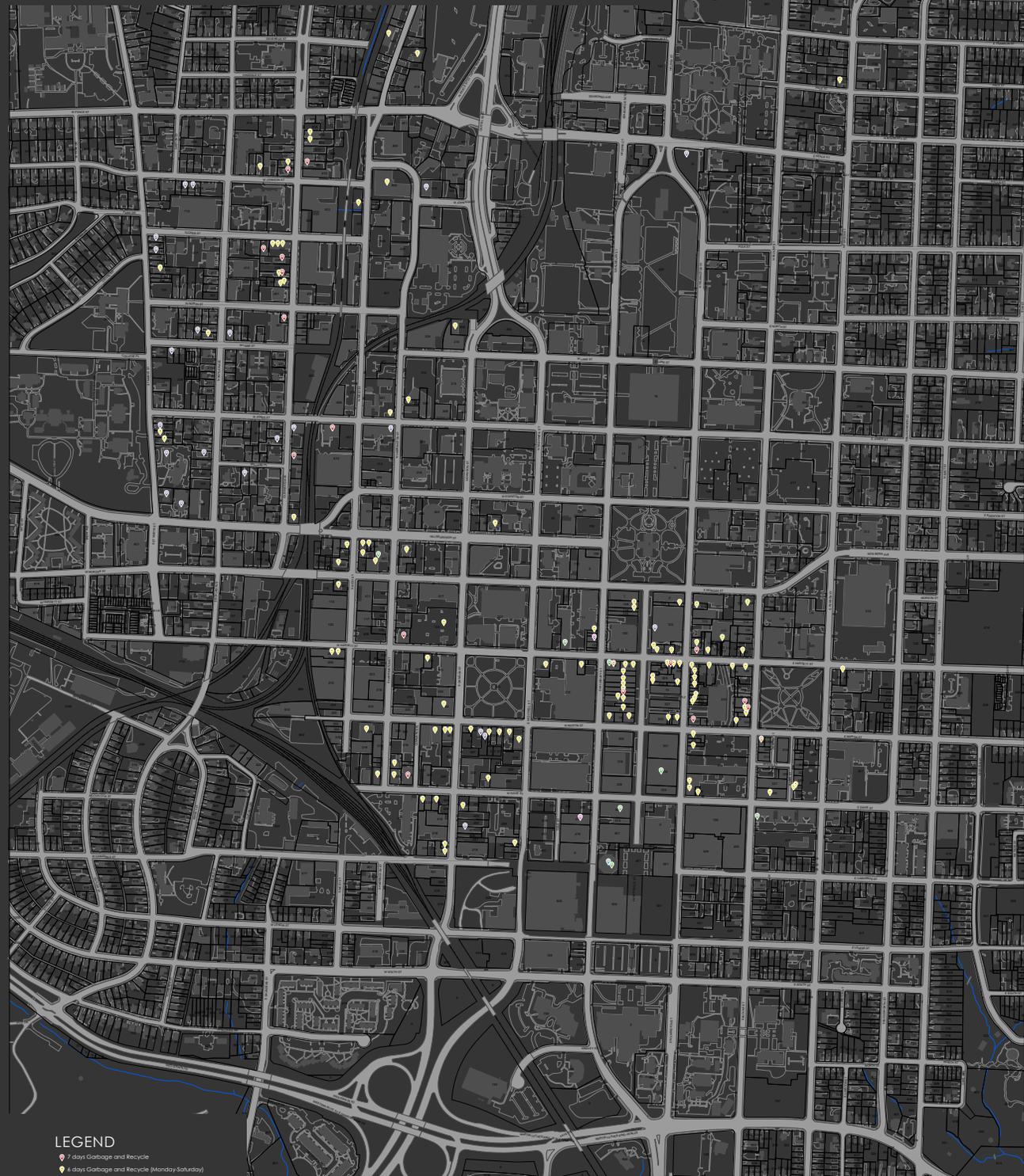
Themes and Key Findings

nearly universal problem that other cities admit to struggling with • extensive reliance on alleys and “lanes” • downtown trash pick-ups during off-peak hours (early in the morning) limits exposure and interruptions • centralized trash disposal and pick-up locations concentrate impact and facilitate pick-up • enforcement and monitoring efforts are critical to downtown trash management schemes • multi-user compactors are aggressively endorsed in cities that have them • no cities report upfitting older historic buildings to better handle their trash loads

Best practices

The Appearance Commission, supported by staff and interns, conducted research on best practices nationwide, with a particular focus on peer cities in the Southeast. Research shows that many cities face similar challenges, and where available most turn to alleys for collection. Where alleys are not available, group collection through the use of shared dumpsters or compactors can be an option.

Downtown Raleigh Solid Waste On Street Commercial Collection



LEGEND

- 7 days Garbage and Recycle
- 4 days Garbage and Recycle (Monday-Saturday)
- 1 day Recycle
- 1 day Garbage
- 1 day Garbage and Recycle
- 7 days Recycle
- 4 days Recycle

Scale - 1" = 250' 02/11/13
0 200 400 800 1,200 Feet



Downtown Raleigh challenges

The working group met with the Downtown Raleigh Alliance and Solid Waste Services staff to determine solid waste pick up processes, schedules, and locations. Above is a map of pick up locations as of February 2013.

Suggested improvements

The Commission applauds the City for supporting these businesses that are revitalizing downtown and offers the following suggestions for improvement:

- **Technology**

Based on conversation with City and DRA staff, and select business representatives, the Commission recommends that the City pursue the placement of shared compactors in city parking decks. Further research will be needed on space needs, technology, and revenue implications, and how to incentivize shared use of these facilities. The City should also consider how this technology and shared disposal points (publicly or privately operated) could positively impact mixed-use environments outside of downtown, such as North Hills, Five Points, and Hillsborough Street.

- **Code change**

Downtown commercial curbside pickup should be reserved for historic buildings where on-site accommodation is not physically practical. The Commission recommends that the City draft a text change that requires new construction, regardless of ownership structure, to accommodate waste handling and removal (both trash and recycling) on site and outside of the right of way, as is already standard for locations outside of downtown.

The Commission recommends that Council and staff prioritize this code change, as downtown is growing rapidly and the potential for the spread of curbside pickup issues to new business locations is high.

- **Special Events**

Waste collection and disposal during special events can be a challenge, often resulting in the use of nearby businesses' trash and recycling cans. The Commission recommends that the DRA and new City special events office clarify and enforce the regulations for trash collection associated with special events.

- **Clarification of roles and responsibilities**

As downtown businesses proliferate, the challenge of maintaining a streetscape free of litter, human waste, and broken glass grows. The Commission recommends that the City and DRA work together to encourage business owners to be aware of their responsibilities to maintain the sidewalks adjacent to their businesses and to enforce existing ordinances as appropriate.