

CITY OF DARLINGTON
HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

The City of Darlington Historic Landmarks Commission met on **August 1, 2022**, via Zoom. Attending were commission members Ms. Pierson, Ms. Pruitt, and Mr. Smith, as well as staff member Mrs. Bailey, and guest, Staci Richey of Access Preservation.

Ms. Pierson called the meeting to order at 5:47 p.m. without a quorum, so all discussion would be for information only.

Southeast Darlington Architectural Survey: Ms. Richey thanked the City for allowing her to work on this project, and the final report would be submitted at the end of the month. She said the resource survey has several components, a historical context report, a field survey, and recommendations for nominations to the National Register.

The context report is critical to understanding the history of the area. The survey area has a unique street pattern for Darlington with square street blocks and uniform lot sizes while most of Darlington grew more organically. The northern half of the survey area is very different from the southern half. In 1890, a Land Improvement Company plotted out the area with the streets going east to west being alphabetically named avenues and the streets going north to south being numerically named streets. There is a strong planning component typical of the late 1800s where speculative groups of wealthier white men invest and build spec houses or rental properties. The original plans showed the houses would only face the avenues, but it developed slowly with houses facing both the streets and the avenues. The first resident Edmund Deas was an African American man involved in state politics whose home on E Avenue still stands and is individually listed on the National Register. In 1911, in the east part of the survey area, a railroad running from north to south near Fourth and Fifth Street cut off residential development, and industries moved into the north part of the survey area. In the 1940s to the 1970s, the southern part of the survey area developed and was called Washington Terrace. Of the 317 properties surveyed 278 were domestic with commercial enterprises sprinkled in creating a parallel economy to the white businesses in town. Commercial remains on South Main Street, and there is the possibility of a district for the commercial corridor for African Americans on both sides of South Main Street. In 2002, a survey had been done of 66 buildings in the area, mostly shotgun style homes built in the 1950s. Nearly half (45%) have been demolished in the last 20 years. The Avenues, A Avenue to H Avenue, would be the only area recommended as a historic district because it still has the integrity of the street design and speaks to the history of the 1890s land development movement. Integrity is often a challenge in African American communities because a lot of buildings have had changes, porches added, spaces enclosed, etc. Only about 30 of the 170 properties have not been touched. This is typical of African American communities to enclose spaces. Half of these homes were rentals in the 1930s and 1940s. The changes in and of themselves may be historic as African American families became owners of the properties. It would be up to someone else to create and apply for a National Register listing.

Additionally, Richey recommends in her report that more research be done on the Darlington Veneer Company, which has a great collection of industrial buildings that speaks to how it's grown and changed over the years. It was the major employer for the African American families living in the survey area, and Dixie provided employment particularly in the 1940s for white women. Second, the City should consider adding The Avenues as a local historic district as a counter point, the African American development at the same time as the other historic districts in town. Lastly, the report recommends the City do more research into the African American history because it was challenging to find anything written and at some point it would be great to capture that history.

Mrs. Bailey will send out a summary of the discussion and the recommendations to the Commission to discuss at the November meeting and consider next steps.

The meeting adjourned at 6:07 p.m.