

HISTORY MUSEUM HONORS PRESERVATION CHAMPIONS AT CHARLOTTE GEM PRESERVATION AWARDS

Awards recognize projects that preserve and protect Charlotte's architectural heritage

Museum to honor former Charlotte Mayor Anthony Foxx with Charlotte Gem Award and McCrorey Heights Neighborhood Association with Excellence in Preservation Award

CHARLOTTE, N.C., April 18, 2023 – The Charlotte Museum of History will honor winners of its eighth Charlotte Gem Preservation Awards on Thursday, May 11, at the museum's premier fundraising event. Presented by Diamond Sponsor Bank of America, the awards recognize outstanding preservation projects in the Charlotte region and are designed to encourage preservation of the area's historic buildings and streetscapes.

Anthony Foxx, former Charlotte Mayor and former U.S. Transportation Secretary, is the evening's featured speaker, and the museum will award him the first-ever Charlotte Gem Award based on his history-making service to the Charlotte region.

In addition, an independent panel of local architects and preservation enthusiasts selected six restoration and building projects to receive Charlotte Gem Preservation Awards, along with two honorable mentions. All of this year's winning projects are in Mecklenburg County, including the McCrorey Heights Community Association, which won the 2023 Excellence in Preservation Award. The association preserves the historically Black neighborhood's history, and the group advocated for the neighborhood to become a City of Charlotte Historic District, a designation that became official in August 2022.

"There is a common refrain in our city that we don't have any history left; that we are a city of teardowns. But Charlotte still has many buildings worth saving," said Terri L. White, president and CEO of the Charlotte Museum of History. "We hope the Charlotte Gem Preservation Awards will encourage more preservation projects in our region, as well as sensitive new construction that integrates into our existing historic environments."

Before and after the awards ceremony, guests at Charlotte Gem will enjoy moonshine tastings, axe throwing, musical performances by The Summer Soul Xperience, lion dancer performances by Thundering Wave Martial Arts and special access to the museum's newest exhibits.

All proceeds from the event support the mission of the Charlotte Museum of History to save and share Charlotte's history, including ongoing preservation of Charlotte's oldest home, the 1774 Alexander Rock House, and its historic homesite, which the museum maintains and interprets.

2023 Charlotte Gem Preservation Award Winners

Inaugural Charlotte Gem Award – *A person who actively works to make the Charlotte region a better place through advocacy, volunteerism and general support for our community.*

Anthony Foxx

The museum's board of trustees selected Charlotte native Anthony Foxx to receive the inaugural Charlotte Gem Award because of his life-long commitment to improving the Charlotte region and his history-making role in the city. When he was a student at Davidson College, Foxx was the first African American Student Government Association President. As Charlotte Mayor he spearheaded the city's effort to bring the first major national political party convention to Charlotte with the 2012 Democratic National Convention, and he was the first Charlottean to serve as U.S. Secretary of Transportation. He also has worked to highlight important aspects of our region's history as chair of the Commission on Race and Slavery at Davidson College.

Excellence in Preservation Award – *A person, group, or project that preserves the cultural or built heritage of a neighborhood or community.*

McCrorey Heights Neighborhood Association

McCrorey Heights sits on approximately 71 acres just north of Uptown and is one the most important historically Black neighborhoods in the nation. Founded in 1912 by H.L. McCrorey, the second Black President of Johnson C. Smith University, the area developed in the 1950s and 60s as a neighborhood

for Black teachers and preachers, becoming a catalyst behind the Civil Rights Movement. Meetings to challenge the racially segregated status quo and to establish new freedoms for Black people were often held inside these modest, mid-century homes. Many refer to McCrorey Heights as a neighborhood of firsts. McCrorey Heights residents were the first Black people to demand to eat in the Charlotte Douglas International Airport restaurant, to join city government, to become top administrators at Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, to integrate local public schools and to fight to tee off on an all-white golf course. Over the years, McCrorey Heights residents have been business owners, lawyers, medical doctors, ministers, school principals and presidents of Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

In addition to the neighborhood's cultural and social significance, it is one of Charlotte's best-preserved neighborhoods from the boom decades following World War II, with both pre-war and post-war examples of ranch style and related designs. All of the houses are custom built, with many plans selected from magazines and newspapers of the day. A favorite builder of McCrorey Heights residents was Mangie McQueen, perhaps Charlotte's busiest Black residential contractor of his time and a resident of McCrorey Heights. Architect Harvey Gantt, Charlotte's first Black mayor, designed two prominent buildings in the neighborhood—the Matilda Spears house and the First Baptist Church West complex on Oaklawn Avenue, both in his characteristic powerful 1970s modernist style.

Some 70 years later, thanks to the efforts of residents and the McCrorey Heights Neighborhood Association, most of the homes constructed in McCrorey Heights remain relatively intact.

Preservation Award *with Distinction* (Residential) - Restoration of a historic residential structure
The Wadsworth Estate & Carriage House, Wesley Heights, 400 South Summit Ave.

In 1911, prominent local businessman George Pierce Wadsworth commissioned the design and construction of The Wadsworth Estate, located in what is now Wesley Heights, as his family home. The house was later home to Judge Shirley Fulton, the first Black female prosecutor in Mecklenburg County, the first Black woman on the Superior Court bench in North Carolina and a community leader who was instrumental in helping gain historic designation for the Wesley Heights neighborhood. Under Fulton's ownership, the home became a space for community members to gather. In 2018, Mark and Alyson Miller acquired The Wadsworth Estate and began restoring it to its original splendor, including careful

rehabilitation of the home's bedrooms, bathrooms, fireplaces, signature full-width porch and cedar shake siding, which had to be sourced in Canada. The Millers also restored the property's Carriage House and added a rear patio for use as an event space, maintaining the home's legacy as a community gathering place.

Preservation Award (Residential) - *Restoration of a historic residential structure*

Cohen-Fumero House, Coventry Woods, 1154 Cedarwood Lane

Built in 1961, this historic landmark is one of just a few high-style, midcentury modern buildings left in the region. Noted architect Murray Whisnant designed the house for artists Herb Cohen and Jose Fumero, who wanted a home built for artistic expression and entertaining. It became a center of artistic social life in 1960s Charlotte. The home sat vacant for many years and was in serious disrepair when local realtor Charlie Miller purchased it and began restoration efforts in 2019. He restored or renovated the entire house, including removing 1990s-era changes that were not authentic to the home's original design. Miller meticulously refurbished many of the home's historic interior elements, including its tiger-stripe mahogany paneling, floor-to-ceiling mahogany doors with original hardware and expansive glass windows and sliding doors.

Preservation (Commercial) – *Restoration of a historic commercial structure*

First Presbyterian Church, Fourth Ward, 200 West Trade St.

In 2021, First Presbyterian Church in Fourth Ward began extensive renovations to its main buildings, including its sanctuary, to meet the congregation's changing needs. Located in the heart of Charlotte and originally built in 1857, the church is one of the oldest structures in the city. Set in a tree-shaded park, the church is a prominent visual presence and a reminder of the Gothic Revival style common for church architecture in the 19th and 20th centuries. Foundational to the recent renovations was a commitment to preserve and reuse every original element possible in the sanctuary. This meant carefully dismantling, restoring and reinstalling more than 4,000 square feet of hardwood floors and preserving all of the original decorative light fixtures, including chandeliers that were installed in 1895. Other decorative brass and crystal light fixtures were restored, along with the historic pulpit and the original 20-foot stained glass windows, including three commissioned by Tiffany and Lamb dating back to 1895. All told, more than 90 percent of the historic interior items were successfully restored and reincorporated.

Preservation (Commercial) – Restoration of a historic commercial structure**Supperland, Plaza Midwood, 1212 The Plaza**

Award-winning restaurant Supperland opened in March 2021 in two historic church buildings in Plaza Midwood, one of Charlotte's oldest neighborhoods. The husband-wife owners, Jeff Tonidandel and Jamie Brown, chose to preserve the red brick exteriors of the two historic buildings (built in 1948 and 1956) and to design some of the restaurant's interior elements to tell the story of the property's original use as a church. That included staining the original floors to highlight the center aisle of the church, plus creating a show kitchen to draw the eye to where the energy would have been in the church – toward the pulpit and choir. They also kept original walls that were rough from plaster being torn off over the years. In addition to the restaurant, the couple created a speakeasy in an unfinished basement in the smaller of the two historic church buildings. Repurposing these old church buildings in Charlotte, a city known for its churches and church architecture, preserves a valuable marker of the city's past.

Neighborhood Infill (Residential) - New residential building that integrates sensitively with its historic environment**Latta Park Lantern House, Dilworth, 719 Romany Road**

This new infill home in the heart of historic Latta Park fits seamlessly into Dilworth's front-porch culture, honoring the historic neighborhood's architecture. With its natural stone foundation, balanced asymmetry and trellised front patio, the new structure borrows stylistically from the original cottages built in the area starting in the 1940s.

Preservation Award (Residential) – Honorable Mention - Restoration of a historic residential structure**William Peeps House, Dilworth, 831 East Worthington Ave.**

William Peeps, among the most important architects in early 20th-century Charlotte, built this home in Dilworth in 1919 for himself and his wife. Over the years, various owners constructed additions and undertook renovations that obscured most of Peeps's design philosophy. Working with a local architect, the current owners unearthed Peeps's original architectural plans and renovated much of the home to reflect his design. That included restoring the formal entry door and portico on the side street and even removing a modern master bathroom to restore the architect's upper studio space for use as an open den. Original window sashes discovered in the basement were refurbished and used to replace vinyl windows that had been added over the years.

Preservation Award (Residential) – Honorable Mention - *Restoration of a historic residential structure*

1508 Dilworth Road, Dilworth

Built in 1921, this Georgian-style home in Dilworth has seen many interior renovations over the decades, but its historic exterior was badly deteriorated. The new owners updated the home's interior for modern living while restoring its historic charm, including repairing the brick façade and slate roof and carefully restoring all original windows. Sensitive additions were made to the back of the house to maintain the historical integrity of the streetscape, as the house is listed as a contributing structure to the historic Dilworth neighborhood in the National Register of Historic Places.

How to Go

The Charlotte Gem Preservation Awards are Thursday, May 11, at 6 p.m. at the Charlotte Museum of History. Cocktail attire. Tickets start at \$75 and are available at charlottemuseum.org/events. Limited sponsorship opportunities are still available by contacting the museum.

The museum thanks all of the event's sponsors, including Diamond Presenting Sponsor Bank of America and its Emerald Sponsors—Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner; Cadwalader; Katten and TD Bank.

The Charlotte Museum of History exists to save and share the Charlotte region's history, helping create a better understanding of the past and inspiring dialogue about the future. The museum is the steward of the [1774 Hezekiah Alexander Rock House and homesite](#), which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is the oldest home in Mecklenburg County. The museum is the future home of the [historic Siloam School](#). Visit charlottemuseum.org and follow the museum on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#). The museum is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

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