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News Release

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Joint Committee Presents Recommendations for Confederate Statue

Comprehensive Report, Including Feedback from Residents Available Online

DURHAM, N.C. – The Durham City-County Committee on Confederate Monuments and Memorials presented its recommendations for the Confederate Statue toppled outside the Old Courthouse at today’s City-County Joint Committee Meeting. In addition to the Committee’s recommendation to preserve the toppled statue, the 12-member group selected by the City Council and County Commission released a comprehensive [report](#) of their overall findings. To read the Committee’s complete report, visit www.dconc.gov/ccmc.

According to the Committee, co-chaired by Dr. Charmaine McKissick-Melton and Robin Kirk, Durham leaders should re-locate the Confederate statue in its current condition to a secure exhibit inside the County building nearest the base. The Committee also noted that the statue exhibit should be accompanied by interpretive text explaining its origin and the history that led to its fall. In its new location, the statue and its base would be accessible to those who wish to honor veterans.

Other highlights from the report and presentation include:

- Commissioning a new piece of public art incorporating the existing statue base
- Moving the new memorial to a city cemetery when legally possible.

The Committee reached a consensus on all of its [recommendations](#). In the report, the Committee noted that the statue, erected in 1924 and toppled in 2017, remains as much a historical artifact of current times as it is an artifact of the period when it was planned and erected. The report recommends that the statue should be displayed in its current condition so that whole history of race relations and the fight for civil rights in Durham may in part be illuminated through this object.

During its six-month deliberation, the Committee engaged in robust public conversations and collected information from a range of experts. Reflecting the public at large, Committee members brought views that covered a spectrum. “However, we shared a commitment to crafting recommendations that communicate Durham’s values and our shared sense of how public memorials can best reflect them,” said Co-chair Robin Kirk.

“As an educator of Mass Communication, I teach that the keys to a functioning democracy are a free press and free speech,” co-chair McKissick-Melton said. “This Committee exemplified the free speech process by allowing as many City and County residents as possible to be heard. This process provided the Committee with the diverse perspectives we used to shape our recommendations. I am proud to have been a part of the process.”

The Committee recommended that the City and County commission a new piece of public art incorporating the existing statue base remaining outside the Old Courthouse. The proposed new art, they said, should provide a more holistic understanding of the experience of the Civil War in Durham. According to the report, this expanded memorial should continue to honor the sacrifice of military veterans and include those from Durham who fought for the Union as well the Confederacy. This expanded memorial should also recognize and honor enslaved people, those who worked for a more equal and just society, and the women and children who suffered at home. A redesigned memorial could look to the [Unity Monument at Bennett Place](#) as a model.

“Our goal was to look to the future, not re-fight past battles,” Co-chair Kirk noted. “Central to our recommendations is that we accept all of our past, to paraphrase Pauli Murray, both the dignity and the degradation of our ancestors. Above all, we see this as an opportunity to deepen our commitment to education and the values that unite us, including a commitment to learning and embracing our increasingly diverse community.”

The Committee also prepared a catalog of all known Confederate monuments and other remnants of the Confederacy or the history of enslavement existing in Durham. Of those sites, the Committee highlighted the North Carolina [state highway historical marker to Julian S. Carr on West Chapel Hill Street](#). The Committee recommends petitioning the North Carolina Highway Historical Marker Advisory Committee to rework the language used in the Carr marker and in the accompanying [online essay](#). According to the Committee, recognition of Carr's business successes and philanthropy should be accompanied by information on his membership in the Ku Klux Klan and his white supremacist views and activities.

The Committee also collected ideas on people, events, and locations missing from Durham’s historical narrative, a rich trove that reflects the community’s desire for more inclusive and diverse sites. Often mentioned was the contributions of workers, mill, tobacco, and agricultural, civil rights leaders, and women. The Committee felt strongly that the City and County should invest in new public art and memorials that honor a broader range of Durham achievement.

For more information about the City-County Committee on Confederate Monuments and Memorials, visit <https://www.dconc.gov/government/departments-a-e/board-of-commissioners/boards-and-commissions>. The full report completed by the Committee is available on both the [City](#) of Durham and Durham [County](#) websites. Copies of the report are available upon request by contacting the Durham County Clerk to the Board or the City Clerk’s Office.

About the Durham City-County Committee on Confederate Monuments and Memorials

The City Council and County Commission jointly formed the [City-County Committee on Confederate Monuments and Memorials](#). The purpose of the committee is to engage the Durham community in an expansive and transparent public process regarding public monuments and other remnants of the Confederacy present in Durham; make recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners regarding disposition of the toppled Confederate statue as well as the remaining monument outside of

the Old Courthouse/County Administration Building; and catalogue any other public Confederate monuments or symbols of the Confederacy in Durham and make recommendations as to their future disposition to the City Council and Board of County Commissioners. The Committee began its work on May 10, 2018, and hosted eight public meetings between that date and October 13, 2018. Each meeting included a speaker with expertise on an element of the Committee's charge. Throughout, the public engaged eagerly, demonstrating a deep desire to have a say in how Durham moves forward in many areas. The Committee maintained a [Facebook page](#), [Twitter feed](#), the email address DurhamConfederateMonuments@protonmail.com, and physical address to collect opinion. To further facilitate public engagement, a Google survey was circulated via a link posted on Facebook, and email and on neighborhood list-serves.

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