

## WHY LIBERTY WAREHOUSE MATTERS

The Liberty Warehouse brick facade at the corner of Rigsbee and Corporation is a well-known Durham landmark. While much of the half city block it covers is a nondescript ailing metal facade, this corner holds its defining identity. As the last remaining tobacco auction-house left in Durham, it represents Durham's founding cultural heritage. Yet few Durhamites still seem to be aware of its impending demise and planned replacement.

Aside from its history, it is a contributor to the very character of Durham. The city is composed of many building styles that were built both out of necessity and extravagance; together they make up the character of Durham and provide a unique sense of place. This character is the city's biggest asset. The reinvigoration of older buildings in downtown Durham has pulled in new residents and businesses focused on innovation and community building. While there is plenty of room for new building, if it arrives by destroying old buildings, then the character of Durham will continue to erode one block at a time.

Liberty Warehouse has no immediate adjacent buildings left; it is the last remaining piece holding down the Durham character inherent in its district. It should be valued as an asset that can provide a sense of place for the new development. Unfortunately, it has been permitted to be demolished. However, there are options to keep the existing Liberty brick facade.

**OPTION 1:** Proceed with the permitted development and retain Liberty in place.

After studying the plans for the new development, the two residential units slated for the Liberty corner could be incorporated with the façade or given over to commercial space. The space between the facade and the new building could be covered with a seam of skylights, and the entry further down Rigsbee could become an open-air entry to the courtyard as well as provide some increased privacy for the residential units at the street level.

**OPTION 2:** Consider an architecture that is integrated with the historic Liberty facade.

The Liberty facade is composed of a plane of brick with carved-out windows and doors and a stepping band of signage at the top. If we begin to work with these elements and proportions, we can compose a new architecture around it that is visually integrated and that repurposes the building's facade. The use of horizontal elements in the new architecture would also help create a neighborhood feel by visually reducing the overall height. The ground floor could become new commercial space that will continue to energize the streets of Durham.

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