

# Charlotte-Mecklenburg

Historic Landmarks Commission

**Subject:** **Rezoning Petition Comments**

**To:** Charlotte Planning, Design & Development  
**From:** Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission  
**HLC Staff Contact:** Tommy Warlick  
**Date:** July 27, 2023

**Petition #/Petitioner:** 2023-031/Crescent Communities, LLC

**Parcel ID #:** 07305302, 07305303, 07305304, & 07305305

**Location of Property:** Approximately 2.76 acres located on the east side of West Carson Boulevard, north side of South Tryon Street, and south side of Winnifred Street.

**Existing Zoning:** UC

**Proposed Zoning:** MUDD-O

## **Background Information**

One of the parcels included within the petition (tax parcel 07305302) contains the Home Finance Company (“HFC”) building, an award-winning circa 1958 commercial building designed by James Norman Pease, Jr., of J. N. Pease Associates. Pease’s Modernist HFC building design won the inaugural Honor Award from the North Carolina chapter of the American Institute of Architects. *Charlotte News*, February 8, 1958, 1-C; “James Norman Pease Jr.,” *Charlotte Observer*, January 30, 2009. The HFC building has been described as a “small-scale model” of the 119 West Eighth Street headquarters of HFC’s parent company Home Finance Group, also designed by J. N. Pease Associates. SVM Historical Consulting, “Modernist Architecture in Charlotte, North Carolina,” 64, accessed July 27, 2023, [http://landmarkscommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Charlotte-Modernist-Survey\\_9-12-19.pdf](http://landmarkscommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Charlotte-Modernist-Survey_9-12-19.pdf); “Work Started On Building,” *Charlotte Observer*, April 21, 1953, 1-B. As the headquarters of Home Finance Group have been demolished, the HFC building thereby remains the only physical representation of that significant earlier building.

Founded in Charlotte in 1938 by Pease’s father James Norman Pease, Sr. and James Stenhouse, the firm of J. N. Pease Associates designed many well-known buildings throughout Charlotte and North Carolina, and has been an influential advocate of Modernism architectural design for decades. The firm designed Charlotte-area buildings for such clients as the Federal Reserve Bank, the North Carolina State Automobile Association, Lance, WSOC, the *Charlotte Observer*, Duke Power, American Bakeries, Du Pont, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, UNC-Charlotte, CPCC, and Queens College. Beyond Charlotte, the firm’s work has included several projects for

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the U.S. military, the CIA, and several universities, including UNC-Chapel Hill, Appalachian State, NC State, and ECU. Demont Roseman, “Pease: For Charlotte Another Trademark!,” “Many Charlotte Projects,” *Charlotte Observer*, August 18, 1957, D-1; “LaBella Associates Donates Historic Queen City Architectural Archive to UNC Charlotte and CPCC,” NCHeadlines, accessed July 27, 2023, <https://www.ncheadlines.com/releases/labella-associates-donates-historic-queen-city-architectural-archive-to-unc-charlotte-and-cpcc>; “Pease Associates Records,” MS0578, Manuscript Collections, J. Murrey Atkins Library Special Collections and University Archives, UNC Charlotte, accessed July 27, 2023, <https://findingaids.charlotte.edu/repositories/4/resources/1514>.

Over the course of his career, J. Norman Pease, Jr. directed or designed a long list of projects, including the First Union Tower, the Charlotte Observer Building, the Duke Power Company Computer Center, Marshall Park, the North Carolina Center for Public Television in Research Triangle Park, ten projects on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus (including biomedical research facilities for the School of Medicine), Camp Grimes Boy Scout Camp, and the master plans for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center, Queens College, and Central Piedmont Community College. He was also the first recipient (1988) of the Kamphoefner Prize for Architectural Excellence given by the North Carolina Architectural Foundation. “James Norman Pease Jr.,” *Charlotte Observer*, January 30, 2009.

The magnitude of Pease’s other works, as well as the professional recognition by his peers of his work on the HFC building, is what makes this small-scale building and its preservation for future generations so significant. Although not yet designated as a local historic landmark, the HFC building is currently on the Historic Landmarks Commission’s study list for designation. The three remaining tax parcels included within the petition (07305303, 07305304, & 07305305), which comprise approximately 2.4 of the 2.76 acres of the overall proposed project, are empty lots.

### **Impact of the Proposed Rezoning/Development**

As proposed, the project would demolish the historic HFC building to accommodate some as-yet undefined new development.

### **Recommendations**

Approval of Rezoning Petition #2023-031 would result in the loss of an award-winning Modernist commercial building – the work of an influential local architect and his decades-old family architectural firm – that has been part of the South Tryon corridor’s built environment for more than six decades. It is recommended that any resolution of the petition be conditioned upon preservation of the HFC building. The Historic Landmarks Commission is available to consult with Petitioner as to the identification and implementation of suitable preservation strategies for the structure as part of any future development of the property.