Eight-time Durham Mayor William V. “Bill” Bell will be honored for his design legacy at the 23rd annual Designlife gala for leading the transformation of the city of Durham from a fading tobacco town into a thriving cultural community.

A former senior electrical engineer (retired 1996) at IBM; Bill was first elected to the Durham County Board of Commissioners in 1972. He served for 26 years (1972 – 1994; 1996 – 2000 and as Chairman 1982 – 1994). He was first elected mayor of Durham in 2001 and stepped down in 2017, having served as Durham’s longest-serving mayor. During his time in office, he oversaw the revitalization of the city, with over $1.7 billion in public and private investment. Projects include such notable landmarks as the American Tobacco Campus and the Durham Performing Arts Center, as well as the restoration of old buildings into apartments and a surge in new restaurants.

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Our Award Winner
William V. “Bill” Bell
Designlife describes the essence of design education and its practice at the NC State College of Design. We teach students to "design for life and to lead the design life." The College’s Leaders Council, along with other donors to the Design Professional Outreach Fund, are a community of alumni, friends, design professionals and industry leaders whose purpose is to support, nurture and promote design education at the College of Design through volunteer efforts, special programs and events, and private contributions.

The Designlife Award celebrates the role of design and the arts in improving lives in the community. The College established the award in 1998 to celebrate the vitality of the design community and design education. The award honors a significant contribution that individuals have made to design in the southeastern United States.

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