



clockwise from top left: upstairs dressing/gathering area, front porch, front exterior, upstairs dressing room/gathering area, sunroom, back exterior



wadsworth estate

a new entertainment venue emerges in v



This summer, the 98-year-old Wadsworth House in the historic neighborhood of Wesley heights was transformed into The Wadsworth Estate. With the opening of the Carriage House, a small freestanding structure located in the back of the property, Charlotte brides now have a second wedding chapel in which to be married—and a single location of elegant sophistication where both the ceremony and reception can be held.

The venue, owned and operated by Judge Shirley Fulton since 2001, is also the perfect spot for other kinds of receptions and parties, community events and business meetings. Its location—just a mile from the heart of uptown Charlotte on tree-lined South Summit Avenue—has made it a popular and much-sought-after site by hosts and hostesses throughout Charlotte. It's also easily accessible from South Charlotte by way of Providence Road, which turns into Morehead Street. There's plenty of on-street parking.

“Wadsworth has evolved into a community space that brings people in from different areas of Charlotte,” Fulton says. “It has a wonderful view of uptown, the front porch is very attractive, people love to visit the garden, and there are many different spaces in the house where people can gather

by bea quirk
photos by ashley blake summerlin

wesley heights



formal dining room



upstairs meeting space

or be alone. People are impressed by the intimacy of the space.”

Fulton, now retired from the bench and the practice of law, bought the building in 2001. But she had long been in love with its architectural character and had her eye on it for several years.

Fulton helped lead efforts to revitalize Wesley Heights, now a popular in-town address for both those who have renovated old homes and for new condo dwellers. Her dream was to create a unique meeting place on the city’s Westside and make Wadsworth House the crown jewel of the Wesley Heights’ renaissance. The house was designed in 1910 by local prominent architect, Louis H. Asbury, and was built by developer E.C. Griffith in 1911. It was one of the first homes built in Wesley Heights, then a streetcar suburb.

“Its history is part of the appeal,” says Fulton who runs Wadsworth with her son Kevin Goode. “I wrote a letter to the owner telling him I was interested in buying it, but I never heard from him. Then after he died—about 10 years later—the estate found my letter and contacted me.”

The building was structurally sound, although plumbing and electrical systems were updated and aesthetic improvements made. The décor is eclectic,

but features the classic ambience of the arts and crafts movement from the period when the house was built. Fulton shopped throughout the region to find distinctive pieces.

The house remains architecturally distinctive and stands out from the one-story bungalow homes that run down both sides of the street. Sheathed in wood shingles, the main house has a raised, brick foundation, a hip roof covered in asphalt shingles, overhanging eaves and hip roofed dormers. Inside, a broad staircase, with square, classical box balusters and a curved newel, rises to a landing with a segmental arched stained glass window.

The 1,600-square-foot Carriage House is not only an attractive wedding chapel, but can also be used for a reception or conference with about 85 to 100 guests. It is one of only a handful of such period structures in the city today. With its opening, Fulton has decided to rename the venue Wadsworth Estate.

The Carriage House will also enable Wadsworth Estate to host such public events as salsa dance classes and etiquette classes for children, as well as business and organizational retreats and small banquets.

The 4,500-square-foot main house, designated a historic property on both the local and national levels,



features a series of rooms on two floors and can comfortably hold 125 to 150 people. People can gather in a large group in the two front rooms or socialize in several smaller rooms for more intimate conversations. Guests also love to see and be seen on the spacious traditional Southern veranda that graces the front of the house.

The upstairs adds further versatility as the secluded, self-contained areas can be used for a variety of purposes, such as serving as pre-wedding space for the bride and groom. Organizations such as Bank of America, Wachovia, the city of Charlotte, the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation and the Foundation For The Carolinas primarily use the 1,500 to 1,800 square feet of rooms there for meetings and conferences.

Weddings have been held on-site for the last several years in the garden beside the main house. Vestiges of the terraced lawn survive, as do some original plantings, including mature oak and maple trees.

The Wadsworth Estate also hosts a number of public events. Jazz Nights are held from 9 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. the first Friday of each month. For \$10, patrons

can soak up cool jazz performed by local musicians, nibble on delicious heavy hors d'oeuvres and imbibe fine beer, wine and cocktails from a cash bar.

The third Friday of each month is Margarita Night, a free opportunity to mix and mingle and sip on \$5 margaritas. Wine tastings are held quarterly. Admission is free and "then you taste and buy what you want," Fulton says. Visitors can also tour the home in October and December when it is lavishly decorated for Halloween and Christmas, respectively.

Wadsworth has a list of preferred caterers, which include some of the best in Charlotte including Something Classic, Chef Henry and Uptown

Catering. But staff works with all caterers, and there is a working kitchen on-site. Staff will also go the extra mile to find a distributor who can supply just the beer, wine and cocktails a client wants.

Fulton, who has played several roles at the nearby Charlotte School of Law, lives just a few blocks from the Wadsworth Estate and often drops in on events to personally make sure every detail is as it should be and that clients are happy.^E

"[The Wadsworth Estate's] history is part of its appeal."
shirley fulton

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