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Our Roots Run Deep: Robert “Bob” Drakeford, Carrboro’s First and Only African-American Mayor



Robert “Bob” Drakeford made history as Carrboro’s first and only African-American mayor, elected in 1977. Long-time residents remember him as the young activist mayor who was elected as part of the progressive Carrboro Coalition in the 1970s. Current Carrboro Mayor Lydia Lavelle was so intrigued by hearing about Drakeford’s tenure as mayor that she met him in Scotland County (where he now lives) in 2017 while he was interviewed for an oral history project. Mayor Lavelle said, “I so enjoyed hearing Mayor Drakeford talk about the Carrboro of the 70s - in particular his efforts to get the transit system extended to Carrboro, and his work in Washington, D.C. with other progressive southern African-American mayors during the Carter administration.”

Drakeford’s accomplishments are still impacting the town today. Mayor Pro-Tem Damon Seils told *The Daily Tar Heel* in 2017, “He had a pretty progressive reputation at a time before Carrboro had really taken on that reputation, and he was sort of our first bicycling mayor and made a lot of advances for cycling infrastructure in the town.” Drakeford also hired the first professional planner for the town, also an African-American, setting high standards that eventually helped make Carrboro accessible to pedestrians and cyclists.

This Black History Month, the Town of Carrboro would like to recognize Robert "Bob" Drakeford for his service to the community, for his courage and dedication, and for laying the foundation for an inclusive community.