



HOWARD AND LILLIAN LEE

Howard Nathaniel Lee was born on July 28, 1934, on a sharecropper's farm in Georgia. In 1962, he married his wife, Lillian. Together they moved to North Carolina in 1964, where he earned a master's degree in social work from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. After encountering racial tension in his predominantly white neighborhood, he entered local politics. In May of 1969, Lee became the Town's first and only Black mayor. He was also the first Black mayor in a white-majority southern town since the Reconstruction. During his three terms as mayor, Lee helped create equitable zoning policies and a public housing program. He also pioneered Chapel Hill's now-extensive transit system in partnership with the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He later served as a state senator, the chair of the state Board of Education, and the secretary of the N.C. Department of Natural Resources and Community Development.

The Howard and Lillian Lee Center was dedicated on June 20, 2022