

Why does TMUG meet in downtown Durham?

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The question is asked occasionally, usually by residents of a certain large city in Wake County, as to why we meet in downtown Durham, since there are so many other places around, and since we used to meet in RTP right on I-40, which made for easier access. Here is an answer, with probably more background and detail than normal humans want, but without which I cannot explain our reasoning.

We struggled for over a year to find a place closer to our previous site. The one we found was better in many ways (better parking, internet connection), but was not nearly as expensive as every other place we found in RTP. Most of the venues in that area (hotels and schools, mostly) wanted a minimum of \$600 for a single night, before charging for Internet access. And we would have had to furnish our own wireless Access Point. At our new location, we are paying about \$100 per month. While we tried to stay on the I-40 corridor in RTP, financially, we would have had to triple our dues, move to meeting every other month and having bake sales to raise the money necessary.

The NC Mutual Life building is less than ten minutes drive further along the Durham connector, and the traffic is actually much better once you leave I-40. I, too, thought it would be too far, but once I got used to the slight extra drive, it seems nothing. And the covered, well-lighted, security-patrolled parking lot is far nicer than the uneven, semi-dark field we parked in at the EPA.

I work in downtown Raleigh, and there are others who drive from Wake Forest, Holly Springs, Cary and Zebulon, as well as folks from Burlington and Chapel Hill. Having a regional group is very difficult, especially when it's volunteer and non-profit and, therefore, can't afford the high rent on a good central location. This location, while a bit west of the center of the Triangle, provides far more bang for our

club bucks than any other site we could find.

The recent discussions about member involvement was not a complaint about the attendance, but a call to be more involved in leadership, which has been a problem in every user group I have been involved with since 1987, both here and elsewhere. Our membership has remained fairly consistent over the past few years. We have roughly 35-50 people every month, and usually enjoy a snack afterwards with about a dozen folks at a nearby restaurant. We've had little complaint from members about the change of location, after they have reviewed the facts presented above. It's not easy to find a compromise, but the advantages of the NCML building far outweigh the slight westward leaning, in the opinion of the many folks I've heard from.

If anyone has a suggestion or would like to head up a group tasked with finding a place more central, the Executive Committee meets on the fourth Monday evening each month at the Golden Corral in RTP on Hwy. 55 near the intersection with Hwy. 54. They would be happy to put your suggestion on the agenda and help you with that project. They usually eat at 6:30, and start the meeting around 7 PM. Any member is welcome to attend and help TMUG hear from all parties interested in furthering Mac use among everyone in the Triangle.

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