



Agenda Action Form Overview

The Board is requested to approve funding for five projects totaling \$100,000 under the current cycle of the Durham County Matching Grants Program. The Durham Open Space and Trails Commission (DOST) has reviewed applications and recommends approval of five projects for the development of new recreational initiatives in Durham County. The projects were approved for recommendation by the Durham Open Space and Trails Commission at its meeting on January 21st, 2026.

Background/Justification

This program provides matching funds to local non-profits for projects that protect open space or create recreational opportunities for Durham County residents. All funded projects must be open to the public. The program is funded annually through the County's operating budget, which allocates \$100,000 for FY25–26. Applicants must provide a 50% match, which may include cash contributions and the value of volunteer labor. Since its inception, the program has supported 135 community projects with a combined value of over \$6.3 million, leveraging \$2.2 million in County matching funds. Applications are first reviewed by the Matching Grants Committee of the Durham Open Space and Trails Commission (DOST) and then recommended for approval by DOST before going to the Board of County Commissioners.

For the 2025–26 cycle, six applications were submitted, requesting a total of \$212,515. DOST recommends funding five projects totaling \$100,000.

Matching Grant Recommended Project Summaries

- 1. Central Park School for Children:** \$24,000 County Funds awarded; organization match \$64,220; Project Address: 724 Foster Street, Durham NC 27701

The Central Park School for Children DOST Grant project will launch the first phase of a dynamic Hill Playscape on the west side of the school's Upper School campus, creating a welcoming new entrance to Old North Durham Park. This innovative playscape will add an imaginative and creative recreational feature to the existing City park by incorporating natural trails, a community service garden, and an integrated slide and climbing area built into the hillside.

- 2. Urban Community Agrinomics:** \$24,455 County Funds awarded, organization match \$60,000; Project Address: 2080 Sawmill Creek Parkway, Durham, NC 27712

UCAN seeks funding to assist in the construction of an on-site Welcome Center that contains a museum, classrooms and kitchen. The facility will serve as a space to provide education and training to support youth and adults in the field of agriculture, a kitchen where training can be provided in meal preparation, cooking and canning. Their goal is to install a commercial kitchen thereby allowing further support of the production of food products and to give other organizations access to do the same.

- 3. El Futuro:** \$18,500 County Funds awarded; organization match \$42,500 Project Address: 2020 Chapel Hill Road, Suite 23 Durham NC 27707



El Futuro seeks to add a Sound Garden: a natural, interactive space that deepens the therapeutic experience through sound, movement and play. The Sound Garden will integrate Latino-inspired musical elements (e.g. xylophone logs, marimba-style instruments, wind chimes, and percussion sculptures) built from natural and sustainable materials. It will encourage child-led exploration through tactile, sensory, and auditory experiences and offer a safe and inclusive environment where parents feel grounded and children can play freely.

4. Historic Stagville State Historic Site: \$23,045 County Funds awarded, organization match \$23,045; Project Address: 5828 Old Oxford Highway, Durham, NC 27712

A DOST matching grant would fund the construction and opening of a new hiking trail at Historic Stagville State Historic Site. This trail will open a hiking path between two major historic landscapes: Horton Grove and the Bennehan House and allow the historic site to add a ½ mile walking trail from the new visitors' center to the southern section of the property. This trail will open a large acreage of woodland to recreational access and allow the public to access historic landscape features (like building foundations, creek beds, and topography) that complement the history of rural African American experiences in slavery and freedom.

5. Unique Places to Save: \$10,000 County Funds awarded; organization match \$23,000; Project Address: 8005 Massey Chapel Road, Durham NC 27713

Unique Places to Save seeks funding for the conceptual design and initial recreation features at their 20-acre nature park on Massey Chapel Road. Features include natural surface trails, bike repair station, picnic area, and interpretative signs all accessible via the American Tobacco Trail.

Policy Impact

The attached Matching Grant Summary supports Goal 2 “Health and Well-Being for All” by increasing the quality of life in Durham County, as well as Goal 4: Environmental Stewardship and Community Prosperity”.

Procurement Background

The Matching Grants Program is a competitive grant program with staffing provided by the Open Space and Real Estate Division. The grant cycle was advertised beginning in late summer 2025 and the application deadline was November 12th.

Fiscal Impact

Funding requests equals \$100,000 of the \$100,00 budgeted for FY 2025-26. No additional funding is needed.

Recommendation

The County Manager recommends that the Board approve funding for five projects totaling \$100,000 under the current cycle of the Durham County Matching Grants Program