

DURHAM
CITY-COUNTY
ENVIRONMENTAL
AFFAIRS BOARD



ANNUAL
REPORT
2025

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Cover Photos

In celebration of Imagine a Day Without Water 2025, a nationwide day of education and advocacy about the value of water, the City of Durham’s Water Management Department has teamed up with the Cultural & Public Art Program to hire local artists for three new murals on the Ellerbe Creek Trail to transform everyday water infrastructure into powerful visual storytelling.

Each artist designed and painted a mural on an above ground wastewater access pipes, or "risers" along South Ellerbe Creek trail, turning functional infrastructure into vibrant art. These murals will explore themes of water access, sustainability, infrastructure resilience, and the essential role water plays in our daily lives. By bringing beauty and meaning to the often-overlooked components of our water systems, the project invites trail-goers to pause, reflect, and engage with the invisible network that keeps our communities flowing.

Artists (clockwise top left): Davis Davis, Thomas Begley, and Zac Bender.

Who We Are

The Durham City-County Environmental Affairs Board (EAB) is an advisory board that consists of fourteen members, three youth members, one member appointed by the Durham County Soil and Water Conservation District Board from its membership, and seven non-voting, ex-officio members. The EAB advises both the City and County on environmental issues.

We advocate for environmental accountability in both the private and public sectors, and consider topics such as air and water quality, the environmental impacts of development and pollution, energy conservation, environmental education, climate change, green building design, greenhouse gas reductions, waste reduction, transit, urban planning, community and economic development. The EAB's official duties are:

1. To advise the City and County on environmental policy;
2. To educate the public and local officials on environmental issues;
3. To perform and advise special studies and projects requested by the City and/or County on environmental questions;
4. To facilitate resident participation and community engagement in local government's consideration of matters involving the environment;
5. To promote intergovernmental and public/private cooperation and coordination;
6. To perform such other duties as may be assigned to it from time to time by the City and/or County;
7. To address community concerns and issues as recommended by members of the Durham community as they relate to the Purpose of the Board;
8. To promote the understanding of equity and environmental implications on all matters, particularly as they relate to the Purpose of the Board;
9. To adopt Rules of Procedure for the orderly dispatch of its business.

Executive Summary

The Environmental Affairs Board served the Durham community by providing guidance and expertise on environmental policies in 2025. The EAB supported initiatives from various environmental stakeholders while also focusing on climate resilience issues throughout Durham. The EAB contributed to regional climate pollution reduction strategies, collaborated with other organizations, and held space to discuss environmental issues with Durham residents. A specific area of focus for the EAB this year was giving feedback to the UDO re-write process and implementing our sustainable decision-making framework.

In April 2025, the EAB held its annual retreat. EAB Members and ex-officios shared the work we have accomplished towards our mission and vision and discussed priorities for the upcoming year.

The EAB Executive Team has continued to put structures in place that will make the EAB more efficient and effective for years to come, while two additional sub-committees worked on their specific priorities. We currently have three sub-committees: (i) Executive Committee, (ii) Land Use and Planning, and (iii) Energy and Climate. The two sub-committees work on their specific initiatives while maintaining climate resiliency as a cross-cutting focus.

Committees of the EAB

- Executive Committee
- Land Use & Planning
- Energy & Climate

Durham City County Environmental Affairs Board

Vision:

The EAB envisions a community of informed residents and elected officials collectively engaged to protect our natural resources and green spaces through equitable and environmentally-sound decision making.

Mission:

The Durham City-County Environmental Affairs Board collaborates with community members, businesses, and organizations to provide guidance to Durham's elected officials and staff on actions and policies that create a sustainable and safe environment for all residents and preserve natural ecosystems and resources.

EAB 2025 Priorities

The EAB selected the following priorities throughout June and July 2024 by creating committee workplans. The EAB has overall priorities, as well as specific ones for each board committee.

Environmental Affairs Board

- Engage actively with City & County budget processes.
- Ensure EAB Committee engagement is high.
- Focus major projects and policy work on climate resilience.
- Serve as an advocacy resource for environmental organizations in Durham.

Executive Committee

- Advocate for elected officials to adopt the use of the sustainable decision-making framework to increase awareness of environmental impacts and mitigation in decision-making.
- Create better processes for following up on resolutions, letters, and commitments through the Historian/At-Large role.
- Document how the EAB engages in the budget process.
- Meet regularly with local elected officials.
- Work on being more present at community events to expose more Durham residents to the EAB's work.

Land Use & Planning Committee

- Continue work in the UDO Task Force to review and comment on the UDO revisions to support sustainable development in the city and county.

Energy & Climate Committee

- Work with the county to enable Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (CPACE) in Durham.
- Review and recommend the adoption of a heat action plan for Durham.
- Work with Durham Public Schools to continue meeting their clean energy goals.
- Work with the City Council on voluntary proffers for rezoning proposals.

2025 EAB Accomplishments

UDO Environmental Protection and Enhancement Task Force. The Land Use and Planning committee of the EAB continued their work with the task force that was started last year. This group was focused on ensuring the environmental goals of the Comprehensive Plan will be met through the UDO revision process. The committee provided recommendations for revisions during the updated UDO plans. The EAB will continue this work into the next year.

Sustainable Decision-Making Framework. The EAB has piloted the decision-making framework tool with three different rezoning proposals that were brought to the City Council in these locations; Howard's Place, Cheek Road, and Brier Creek. Members practiced using the tool, and then sent the summary and results to the City Council before making their decision on each rezoning proposal. For the Howard's Place proposal, we also shared our results in person at their meeting. The EAB is continuing to refine the tool to be usable for others.

Support for Environmental Issues within City and County Departments. The EAB wrote letters in March 2025 to support funding in the 2026 Annual Budget for various environmental issues within Durham. The EAB supported the Stormwater Division's Ellerbee Creek Watershed Study, a county-wide open space acquisition plan with the Planning Department, a continuing salary for an Energy Fellow with the County's Sustainability Department, and General Service's request for more electric landscaping equipment.

EAB Education and Outreach. Educational and outreach documents were created to explain to the general public what the EAB does and how residents can get involved. These documents were made to support our goals of doing more outreach with the public.

Improving the Durham Landscape Manual. After hearing from Robin Schultze from Durham City Planning about updates to the Durham Landscape Manual, the EAB has committed to sending a liaison to the steering committee meetings. The EAB will help support the initiative to increase native plant use on Durham City and County property landscaping.

Supported and Provided Feedback on Governmental and Citizen Priorities. The EAB contributed in various ways on several initiatives including Solarize the Triangle, New Hope Bird Alliance's "Lights Out Durham" initiative, Neighbors Opposed to Moriah Energy Center, electric landscaping equipment, lead testing for residents affected by lead in City Parks, and water quality issues with Brenntag Mid South.

Stay Actively Engaged in Community Organizations. Members of the EAB have committed to attend the meetings of other environmental and/or political entities to understand the important work other groups are doing and report back to the EAB each month. The EAB has had liaisons attend the following meetings: Durham City Council, County Commissioner, the Durham Planning Commission, Green New Deal, and the Durham Environmental Coalition.

Restructured the EAB Activities to Be More Effective at Achieving our Mission.

Examples include: regular meetings with elected officials, revamping our committee structure, maintaining a Historian role for better follow-up, and creating stronger connections between EAB and Durham environmental organizations. These activities have created deeper engagement with Durham City/ County Planning processes and allowed us to be more active in other working groups.

2025 Agenda Topics & Presentations

January		
Topic	Speaker	Purpose
Lead in Durham City Parks	Danielle Doughman, Walltown Community Association	Update the EAB on WCA's work on the lead issue in Durham city parks
Banning Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers	Climate & Energy Committee	Discuss research regarding fully banning gas-powered leaf blowers in Durham
Budget Priorities	Rebecca Hoeffler, EAB	Propose a process and timeline for EAB's support letters within the City of
February		
Topic	Speaker	Purpose
Environmental Justice Approach to Social Movements	Hannah Conway, Duke University	Inform the EAB about new issues related to environmental justice
Durham Water Quality and the UDO	Samantha Krop, Sound Rivers	Update on Durham's water quality work and how it relates to the UDO revisions
Recommendations for Budget Requests	Rebecca Hoeffler, EAB	Present budget items from City/County budgets for EAB to consider supporting
Lead in Durham City Parks	Rachel Della Valle, City of Durham	Report on updates and action items from Jan 27th City meeting

March		
Topic	Speaker	Purpose
Pesticide Pollution Prevention	Alexis Luckey, Toxic Free NC	Inform the EAB about Toxic Free NC's current work and see how EAB can connect
Durham as a Biophilic City	Barbara Driscoll, New Hope Audubon Society	Discuss proposal and requirements for Durham to be a Biophilic City
Recommendations for Budget Requests	Rebecca Hoeffler, EAB	Present budget items from City/County budgets for EAB to consider supporting
Banning Gas-Powered Leaf Blowers	Climate & Energy Committee	Report final recommendation for banning gas powered leaf blowers in Durham
Howard's Place Rezoning	Corie Hlavaty, EAB	Share final report for rezoning proposal using the Decision Making Framework tool and vote on recommendation
April		
Annual Retreat		
May		
Topic	Speaker	Purpose
Upper Neuse River Basin Updates	Forrest Westall, Upper Neuse River Basin Association	Summarize results of 10-year evaluation for Fall's Lake
Stormwater Management Plan	Michelle Woolfolk, City of Durham Public Works	Receive EAB response to Stormwater Management Plan
Voluntary Proffers	Taylor Price, EAB	Update the EAB on Voluntary Proffer project status
Brier Creek Rezoning Case	Tom Campbell, EAB Chair	Determine subgroup to use DOST on this new rezoning case.
Stormwater Management Plan Citizen's Advisory Committee	Michelle Woolfolk, City of Durham Public Works	Discuss and recruit members to join advisory committee.
Voluntary Proffers	Taylor Price, EAB	Taylor gave us an update on the voluntary proffers work

June		
Topic	Speaker	Purpose
UDO Updates	Scott Whiteman, City-County Planning Department	Share new UDO rewrite and take questions and feedback
Brenntag Mid-South Update	Michelle Woolfolk, City of Durham Public Works	Receive update on Brenntag Facility
Heat Action Plan	Tobin Freid, Durham County Sustainability Manager	Receive feedback from EAB on action plan
Executive Committee Elections	Jennifer Carrigan, EAB Chair	Elect new members for EAB Executive Committee
August		
Topic	Speaker	Purpose
Decision Making Framework Tool	Steve Cohn & Jane Korest, Durham County Open Space Program	Discuss similarities and differences in our DOSTs
Brier Creek Rezoning Case	Tom Campbell, EAB Chair	Determine subgroup to use DOST on this new rezoning case.
Stormwater Management Plan Citizen's Advisory Committee	Michelle Woolfolk, City of Durham Public Works	Discuss and recruit members to join advisory committee.
September		
Topic	Speaker	Purpose
CPACE	Tobin Freid, Durham County Sustainability Manager	Update EAB on CPACE requirements and Durham's participation
Durham's Climate Resiliency Efforts	Stacey Poston, City of Durham	Share City department's work on climate resiliency in Durham.
Brier Creek Rezoning Case	Corie Hlavaty & Taylor Price, EAB	Share conclusions for the rezoning case using the DOST

October		
Topic	Speaker	Purpose
Duke University's Carbon Neutrality Goals	Jason Elliot & Tavey Capps, Duke University	Share the university's climate and carbon goals.
UDO Phase 3	Scott Whiteman, City-County Planning Department	Discuss Phase 3's focuses on environmental regulation and get feedback.
Voluntary Proffers	Taylor Price, EAB	Present the ad-hoc committee's results
November		
Topic	Speaker	Purpose
Durham Public Schools Renewable Energy Goals	Aaron Hope, Durham Public Schools	To receive an update on how the district's energy goals are going.
UDO Revisions	Robin Schultze, City of Durham	Robin shared his feedback on the EAB UDO team's feedback on certain sections of the new UDO proposal.
Voluntary Proffers	Taylor Price, EAB	Taylor gave us an update on the voluntary proffers work
December		
Solid Waste's Composting Initiatives	Chris Liszka, Solid Waste	We heard an update on Solid Waste's composting expansion at the current disposal facility
NC Energy Saver Program	Meech Carter, EAB	Meech gave us an update on the expansion of the NC Energy Saver program
UDO Revision Feedback	Tom Campbell, EAB	Discussed and gave feedback on specific sections of the UDO revision

2025 EAB Members

EAB Members Who Left the Board in 2025

Jennifer Carrigan, Ethan Case, Chi Vo, Rebecca Hoeffler, Ben Goldberg, Cooper Norris, Malcolm Gregory, Tamar Schlekat

2025 Durham Environmental Affairs Board City & County Staff Liaisons

Annette Smith, Grants and Special Projects Analyst, City of Durham

2025 Durham Environmental Affairs Board Ex-Officio Members

Tobin Freid, Sustainability Manager, Durham County
City Solid Waste Management Director City General Services Director
City-County Planning Director City Public Works Director
City Water Management Director County Health Department Director
County Engineering and Environmental Services Director

2025 Durham Environmental Affairs Board City Council Representatives

Council Members Nate Baker and Carl Rist

2025 Durham Environmental Affairs Board County Board of Commissioners Representative

Commissioner Wendy Jacobs

EAB Land & Labor Acknowledgement

Today, and all days we are given on this land, we would like to offer recognition and respect to the Indigenous culture of Durham and North Carolina, our past, present, and future stewards of this land. Today we meet on traditional lands stewarded by the Catawba People, currently served by the Lumbee, Tuscarora, and Shakori tribes, previously served by the Occaneechi, Eno, and Adshusheer tribes. We honor those who knew this land, as we hope to know this land, as a sacred and living entity - Lakota thought

To us, it is important to honor this land and its people and to remind ourselves of the privilege we have to steward the land that cares for us and nourishes us.

As context from the US Department of Arts and Culture, a national non-profit organization, a land acknowledgement counters the “doctrine of discovery” with the true story of the people who were already here. Additionally, a land acknowledgment also:

- Creates a broader public awareness of the history that has led to this moment.
- Begins to repair relationships with Native communities and with the land.
- Supports larger truth-telling and reconciliation efforts.
- Reminds people that colonization is an ongoing process, with Native lands still occupied due to deceptive and broken treaties.
- Takes a cue from Indigenous protocol, opening up space with reverence and respect.
- Inspires ongoing action and relationships.

These are all things that the Environmental Affairs Board strives to do.

“Acknowledgment by itself is a small gesture. It becomes meaningful when coupled with authentic relationships and informed action. But this beginning can be an opening to greater public consciousness of Native sovereignty and cultural rights, a step toward equitable relationship and reconciliation.” (Source: US Department of Arts and Culture)

We acknowledge that Durham has been built and developed on wealth extracted from the “labor of enslaved Africans and their ascendants who suffered the horror of the transatlantic trafficking of their people, chattel slavery, and Jim Crow. We are indebted to their labor and their sacrifice, and we must acknowledge the tremors of that violence throughout the generations and the resulting impact that can still be felt and witnessed today.” (Source: Dr. TJ Stewart)

Appreciation & Recognition

The EAB extends sincere gratitude to staff, ex-officios, elected officials, industry professionals, and Durham residents. Sharing your time, expertise, and lived experience with us was invaluable. It would be impossible to complete our duties and advise without your contributions to our work. We would also like to recognize the City and County of Durham for being open to our advice and for their partnership and willingness to collaborate. Lastly, we are grateful to the Durham community for the ability to serve you, while also serving the environment on which we all depend.