



D U R H A M Open Space & Trails Commission

ANNUAL REPORT

January 2018 to December 2018

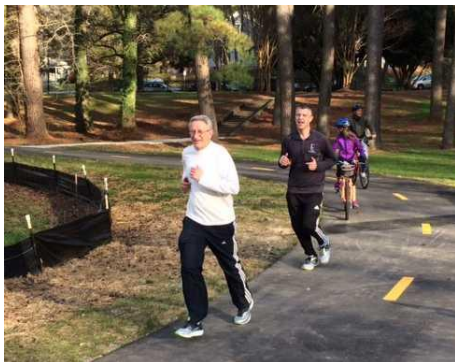
Introduction and Mission

The Durham Open Space and Trails Commission (DOST) is an advisory board that advises the City Council and the Board of County Commissioners on matters relating to the preservation of open space and trails. In order to provide recreational and environmental benefits for the citizens of Durham, the commission promotes the preservation of valuable open spaces, natural vegetation and stream valleys within the urban and rural environment, and the development of trails and other appropriate recreational and transportation facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists. The commission promotes the protection of the natural environment where appropriate to serve the public interest, with equal consideration for long-term care of the environment and the short-term pressures of growth. In doing so, the commission fosters the wise use of the City's and County's natural resources and strives to involve all segments of the Durham community.

The Commission consists of eight members appointed by the City Council, eight by the Board of Commissioners, four elected or appointed officials, and up to 10 members appointed by the Commission. Membership for 2018 was 20.

2018 Accomplishments

West Ellerbe Creek Trail extended: The City was pleased to officially open the West Ellerbe connection on March 22, 2018, Durham's first new trail addition in four years. This project was the "first fruits" of the City's decision to locate Trails Planning within the Parks & Recreation Dept.



Priority Trails: The Commission continued to advocate for funding for nine priority trails identified in Durham's 2011 Trails and Greenways Master Plan. Two of these, the R. Kelly Bryant Trail and the Third Fork Creek Trail extension, have already been fully funded with state assistance, while the Durham Belt Line gathered momentum with the acceptance of \$8.4M in federal funds. All three of these projects are scheduled to begin detailed planning and design in 2019. The DOST Trails

Committee continued, under the banner of its "Twenty for Trails" initiative, to encourage City Council to budget \$2 million each year for ten years in support of the City's trail development program.

DOST currently has eight priority trails:

- Third Fork Creek Trail Extension
- R. Kelly Bryant Bridge Trail
- Durham Belt Line
- Sandy Creek Trail Extension
- Pearsons town Trail Extension
- Warren Creek Trail Extension
- North Ellerbe Creek Trail
- Panther Creek (Seaboard) Trail
- Rockwood Trail
- North Prong Creek/Campus Hills Connector Trail
- Durham Belt Line Connector to R Kelly Bryant Trail
- Third Fork Creek Tributary Trail
- ATT/Forest Hills Park to Lyon Park Connection Trail
- West Ellerbe Creek Trail Extension

Open Space: In 2017 the Planning Department completed the Urban Open Space Plan, and in 2018 DOST urged the City to begin its implementation. The Urban Open Space Plan now joins four other county-wide open space plans, and it represents the first of these plans to acknowledge that environmental inequities exist in the city with respect to existing open space, and it challenges Durham officials to address these inequities. To ensure that this Plan, as well as the four other plans, are actually implemented and implemented successfully, DOST has recommended the following modifications in the Planning Department's operation (1) because open space considerations are shared by many departments and divisions—not simply parks and recreation but also storm water, water quality, urban forestry, public works, neighborhood improvement, real estate, and others—DOST asks that a staff member be designated to oversee and coordinate the implementation of open space initiatives by these various actors; in addition DOST has recommended (2) the creation of an open space budget for the city (as the County already has); (3) an expanded policy re. surplus properties; (4) an annual open space progress report to the City Council.

Equity: The Commission formed a new committee to help address equity concerns, the DOST Equity Committee (tentatively known as DOST-E). Its members want Durham to become more attentive and more proactive about siting trails and open space in ways that avoid unanticipated outcomes such as housing displacement.

Bus Tour / Field Trip: To help familiarize civic leaders (and ourselves) with Durham's current and future trail opportunities, DOST chartered a Greenway Transit bus on May 23, 2018. The bus [carried elected



officials, City and County staff members, and DOST commissioners to five local trail sites for short walking tours. Participants were able to experience the beauty and potential of Durham's trail resources.

Durham County Matching Grants Program

Now in its twenty-eighth year, the Matching Grants Program continues to provide grants to community non-profit organizations for open space and recreation projects throughout the County. When

funds are available, Durham County contributes an annual allocation to support the Program. During the life of this Program, the County's investment of \$1.5 million has leveraged over \$3 million in

monetary and in-kind contributions. DOST hosted tours of select Matching Grant award winners to showcase how the Program has provided grants to community non-profit organizations for open space and recreation projects throughout the County

Durham County Matching Grants Program		
	Program to Date	Year 2018-19
Number of Grants	99	6
Value of County Matching Grants	\$1,580,000+	\$ 77,175
Total Value of Projects	\$3,440,000+	\$ 320,148

For the 2018-19 Grant Cycle, the Committee approved five new projects. Details on the projects and award amounts are below:

<u>Organizations</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Grant Request</u>
Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association	Trail and green infrastructure for Pearl Mill Preserve	\$13,400
Keep Durham Beautiful	Jordan High School trail	\$5,725
E.K. Powe PTA	Green stormwater retrofit	\$20,000
Maureen Joy Charter School	Outdoor basketball court	\$15,000
Durham Parks Foundation	Environmental Education Pavilion	\$11,350
Friends of the DPS Hub Farm	Wetland and meadow system	\$11,700
Total		\$77,175

Overall Commission Goals for 2019

The Commission will continue to promote the preservation of valuable open spaces, the preservation of natural vegetation and stream valleys within the urban, suburban and rural environment, and the development of trails and other appropriate recreational and transportation facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Staffing needs: Currently Durham has no department assigned to plan, design and construct Master Plan trails out in the County, including two rails-to-trails opportunities. Nor does the City have a department tasked to implement the 2017 Urban Open Space Plan. DOST will ask community leaders to help identify ways to close these staffing gaps.

In addition, the Commission has identified the following priorities for 2019:

- Continue to advocate for secure funding to build out the priority trails.
- Continue to advocate for intentional and predictable increased funding for trails and open space (both construction of new trails and maintenance/repairs of existing trails)
- Support the adoption and implementation of the Durham Beltline Master Plan.
- Strengthen Matching Grants program by advocating for increased funding. Examine the process to encourage additional applications from a diversity of applicants and geographic locations.
- Ensure there are trail connections around the planned light rail stations.
- Implementation of the Urban Open Space Plan.
- Work on incorporating natural surface/non-paved trails into the trail network, including the Roxboro Rail-Trail and the lower (north) Ellerbe Creek Trail.

Attachments

Durham Open Space and Trails Commission Attendance