

## Reflections on 2019

Davidson Lands Conservancy's mission is to conserve land and promote a conservation ethic. We do this through land conservation and stewardship, outreach and education, TreesDavidson and urban forestry programs, and greenway collaborations. DLC had a successful 2019 and is prepared to make further advances in 2020.

Katie Noble was hired in March as Programs Director to help with community outreach and engagement, as well as some administrative functions. We advanced land conservation, met our land stewardship goals, and promoted conservation through various channels. Below are some specifics on last year's activities and accomplishments.

### Land Conservation

Last fall DLC conserved the future Beaty Park land on Beaty Street in West Davidson with a permanent conservation easement. This 20-acre parcel, owned by the Town of Davidson, has a complicated and controversial recent history. About 5 years ago, the Town of Davidson leadership proposed large scale, mixed use development on the parcel. A citizen-led effort created a park plan for the land which was adopted by Town leadership. The community recommended permanent conservation of the land to ensure it remains in its mostly natural state and is available as a public park.

Beaty Park is protected by a permanent conservation easement held by DLC. This was a complex conservation project involving innovative design.



*Pond at Beaty Park*

Later in the year, and in partnership with Catawba Lands Conservancy (CLC), DLC received donation of a 33-acre nature preserve in Gaston County. This ecologically rich property is known as the Cook Preserve. CLC holds the conservation easement, while DLC owns the property. Long term, the Cook Preserve will be conveyed to the State of NC as part of the Redlair Preserve, a 1,400 acre preserve with extraordinary ecological features and diversity. The Cook Preserve is home to the Big Leaf Magnolia tree.

DLC's Land Acquisition Committee advanced DLC's strategic conservation plan, building on natural feature mapping completed by Julia Cardwell, our super-star Davidson College intern. The Committee established 30+ conservation priorities. Land protection efforts were focused on land owner outreach and moving forward projects in our pipeline.

DLC's land conservation advances are only possible because of generous support by our Forever Fund donors. The Forever Fund was established and funded in 2018 to advance local land conservation by exclusively paying for direct land conservation project costs.

### Land Stewardship – Taking Care of Conserved Lands

DLC met its stewardship monitoring obligations for 2019. Each conserved property was visited and systematically monitored for significant changes or impacts or threat to conservation values.

Stewardship energies were also focused on the Beaty Park which is highly overgrown with invasive plants. DLC, in partnership with the Town of Davidson, engaged Native Roots (contractor) to cut and treat for removal of the invasive plants from about 75% of the 20-acre property. This work represents phase I of a multi-year effort to eradicate the extensive infestation.

Following the work by **Native Roots**, DLC organized a community volunteer event to remove the cut invasive plants. More than 50 residents and friends participated. The removed plants were generously chipped and removed from the site pro bono by **Bartlett Tree Experts**, a DLC community partner. Additional invasive removal work is planned for 2020.



Community School of Davidson students at Beaty

DLC initiated the Davidson K-8 Observatory project behind the Davidson's K-8 School on South Street. A plan was developed to restore the natural and observatory features of the land, including invasive plant removal, dead tree removal, as well as trail building and tree planting. **Bartlett Tree Experts** generously felled nine hazardous trees, pro bono. **Viz owner, Gary Fankhouser**, is creating the project master plan.

### Accreditation – Best Practices

DLC joined 20 other land trusts in North Carolina receiving accreditation from the Land Trust Alliance. The accreditation process involved comprehensive review of our conservation projects, stewardship function, financial procedures, policies, and practices.

Land trust accreditation is a mark of distinction, showing that a land trust meets high standards for land conservation. It sends a message to landowners and supporters that DLC is a strong, effective organization that can be trusted to conserve land, forever.

### Outreach and Education – Promoting a Conservation Ethic

World of Wonder, DLC's volunteer-run environmental education partner, held weekly booths at the Davidson Farmer's Market (spring through fall) and engaged families in topics ranging from animal habitats to pollinator hotels. WOW also hosted several family outings, including a spotted salamander hunt, a visit to a local apiary, and a chemistry magic show at Davidson College.



Future herpetologist holds a spotted salamander

DLC participated in Earth Day at the Davidson Farmer's market, with a focus on pollinators. At Davidson's Town Day we hosted a booth where children could make wildflower "seed bombs". The Conservancy led an initiative, in partnership with the Davidson K-8 school, to engage 4<sup>th</sup> grade students in an ecological restoration of the trails and woods behind the school (Davidson K-8 Nature Observatory). DLC will partner with the school community to upgrade trails, create outdoor classroom space, place interpretive signage, and plant trees and wildflowers to create a healthier ecosystem for the students, teachers, and community.



Davidson College/WOW Chemistry Magic Show



Students at DK-8 examine a soil profile

DLC and World of Wonder participated in a STEAM event at Woodlawn School. We engaged young learners with a game matching butterflies to their host plants and enjoyed an animal tracks activity.

### **Urban Forestry – Stewarding and Preserving Our Precious Tree Canopy**

TreesDavidson, a DLC conservation program, had an active year expanding and protecting our tree canopy. TreesDavidson held several volunteer tree-planting events last year, including an event along Jackson Street in partnership with the Davidson Rotary Club. The Rotary Club has adopted Jackson Street for a multi-year tree planting project area. Other community partners in tree planting efforts include Community School of Davidson, Ingersoll-Rand, and MSC, all of which supported tree planting efforts with volunteers.



*Volunteers from Davidson Rotary Club at tree planting event – Jackson St*

In addition, DLC has been working for years on enhancing Davidson’s tree ordinance. In 2019, a revised and greatly enhanced ordinance was approved by the Town Board. The new ordinance resulted from several years’ efforts on the part of representatives from the Planning Board and the Livability Board. Dave Cable has been active in moving this process forward over the last several years.

DLC also partnered with the Town of Davidson to secure grant funding for treatment of street trees in the village area for Emerald Ash Borer.

### **Leadership and Board Engagement**

In October, nine board members and staff attended the national Land Trust Alliance’s Rally in Raleigh. Participants attended seminars and working groups focused on a variety of topics including inclusivity and racial equity in conservation, climate change, stewardship practices, fundraising strategies, grant writing, strategic planning, and education and outreach. DLC received its official Accreditation certificate for becoming a Land Trust Alliance certified land trust.



*2019 Run for Green*

### **Run for Green**

2019 was the 14<sup>th</sup> year DLC has held Run for Green and it was our most successful event ever. About 850 runners participated in last year’s race, a record number, who ran 5k, 10k, and a half marathon. Volunteers from our local community, as well as characters from the Renaissance Fair cheered on runners, distributed water, t-shirts, and prizes and so much more. The community support was tremendous.

### **We Need Your Help to Maximize Impact!**

Davidson Lands Conservancy is a local land trust committed to conserving the Davidson area’s natural lands and farms which are under profound development pressures, yet are so critical to our community, our public health, and our ecosystems. Please visit us at [www.davidsonlands.org](http://www.davidsonlands.org).

We need your help - how DLC have the greatest impact in our community? Please send us any suggestions, comments, or questions to [dave@davidsonlands.org](mailto:dave@davidsonlands.org).

The Conservancy exists only because of local support. Thank you for contributing or considering a contribution to our mission. ***DLC is something to believe in.***



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