



CONSERVING OUR LAND

Four Pillars of Success

Your Lands Conservancy has been on a six-month journey of self-reflection and analysis to answer a key question: How do we maximize our impact? We've explored the history of our programs and their impacts, as well as those of other land trusts in the region. Local sources, including findings from the Town's recently completed Comprehensive Plan, were considered. Most importantly, we listened to the community via deep interviews. The journey will continue, but clarity on our role has emerged: A conservation platform built on Four Pillars.

Natural lands are vital to our health, quality of life, and ecosystems.

1 Conserve & Steward Land

The core mission of DLC is permanent land conservation and proper stewardship of land, as the high rate of land development threatens our sense of place and natural resources.

WHY IT MATTERS

- To protect natural lands, which are vital to our health, quality of life, and ecosystems.
- To conserve land to protect water quality; provide open spaces, wildlife habitat, and tree canopy; mitigate climate change; and secure our sense of community.

2 Preserve & Enhance Tree Canopy

Our region is rapidly losing trees as they age out and development increases. TreesDavidson, a science-based DLC program, partners with the community to teach how to plant, care for, and value trees, and expands our canopy through volunteer, community tree-planting.

WHY IT MATTERS

- To preserve the urban forest for the health of wildlife, ecosystems, and human beings.
- To cool the streets, parking lots, and buildings; increase air and water quality; encourage richer wildlife.
- To provide natural beauty and preserve quality of life.

3 Expand Greenways & Trails

Greenways and trails are highly valued for recreation, exercise, and to connect with nature. DLC works with landowners to expand trails and trail connectivity.

WHY IT MATTERS

- To enhance public and mental health and increase property values in adjacent neighborhoods.
- To offer a safe route to key destinations around our area.

4 Preserve Wildlife Corridors

Scattered throughout the community and loaded with wildlife, these corridors are typically wooded and located along small streams. This science-based program identifies, inventories, maps, and educates about key wildlife corridors in Davidson.

WHY IT MATTERS

- To enrich the wildlife habitat; increase biodiversity; improve water quality.
- To educate residents and landowners about these corridors; raise awareness about their value and share land management practices that enhance the wildlife habitat.



Davidson Lands Conservancy is a local land trust dedicated to conserving and stewarding land and to promoting a conservation ethic. DLC advances its mission with education and through programs of land conservation, trails and greenways, urban forestry, and preservation of wildlife corridors.

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FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Focus on the Future



Twenty years ago, Davidson leaders shared a vision to develop a land trust to help protect elements of our town that many of us hold dear, among them trees and open spaces, clean air and water, a love of wildlife, and our sense of place. Today, when many of our interactions are reduced to faces behind masks or in squares on a computer screen, the outdoors seems more and more critical to our physical

and mental health. In that spirit, I'm happy to report that the staff and Board at Davidson Lands Conservancy are as committed as ever before to secure that vision.

Executive Director Dave Cable began his tenure last spring by engaging the Board in a thoughtful process of examination aimed at strategic alignment toward this primary objective—land conservation and stewardship. With a renewed and mission-driven focus, DLC fully embraces the challenge of conserving land in our increasingly urbanized environment, where land and ecosystems have become more scarce, and the pressures of development drive real-estate prices higher. Conservation is extremely challenging here, and yet it is ever more important.

We recognize that our work around land use must acknowledge the connections between environmental, economic, and social justice in our community. We are committed to doing all we can through our work to address pressing issues of climate change and social and racial injustices to make our world a healthier place in every way, today and for future generations.

As we enjoy a beautiful, although different, fall, when outdoor spaces are more valuable than ever, DLC is also stronger than ever, holding true to and even more focused on that 20-year-old vision. On behalf of the Board, our staff, and our generous supporters and volunteers, thank you—we are nothing without our strong community support.

So, let's take a deep breath of Davidson's fresh, fall air—and work to keep it that way.

— Gordon Clark, DLC Board President



UPDATE

Land Conservation and Stewardship

Three project areas for land protection are active at present, covering about 200 acres that include farmland, two forested parcels—one heavily wooded with mature white oaks—and multiple properties in a priority greenway corridor.

Stewardship is gearing up for fall monitoring season, as we complete an audit of our practices, procedures, policy, and records to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. This work involves monitoring conserved lands and, when possible, working with land owners on best land management.

Recently Completed Conservation Projects

- South Thompson Street Conservation Area
- Beaty Park Preserve
- Cook Preserve

DK8 NATURE OBSERVATORY

Blazing New Trails

DLC is proud to announce an exciting design plan for the restored Nature Observatory located behind Davidson K-8 School. In fall 2019, we asked Student Council class representatives to solicit feedback from their classmate constituents about features and infrastructure that would make learning fun and meaningful in an outdoor setting. Taking these suggestions, landscape architect Gary Fankhauser of Viz Designs created a beautiful, natural, and welcoming vision for a true outdoor-lab environment.

The reality of living and learning during a global pandemic has driven home the value of outdoor spaces. Nature provides a respite from the stress of daily life in any circumstances, but particularly under COVID restrictions. Open air venues for safer, socially distanced learning and playing in a school setting give teachers an added option, one with numerous social, cognitive, physical, and mental health benefits for children. As children spend fewer daily minutes in nature every year, outdoor learning labs like the one at DK8 provide critical remedies to the nature-deficit crisis.

Wildlife corridors are typically wooded and located along small streams.



Cora DeBree and Cooper Noble Smith.



Brooke DeBree and Cooper Noble Smith using dip-nets to survey invertebrates in the creek.

DLC is seeking volunteers, in addition to community partners like Ingersoll-Rand, Trane, and MSC, to aid in the construction and repair of trails, boardwalks, bridges, and outdoor-classroom seating circles. If you can donate time or supplies to help our children learn in a safe, physically distanced environment, please contact katie@davidsonlands.org.

"I think that I shall never see..."

Joyce Kilmer got it. (And if that doesn't ring a bell, search for his best-known poem, *Trees*.) *By Brent Evans, TreesDavidson volunteer leader*



Trees play a critical role in the beauty, health, and wellbeing of Davidson. Because every mature tree we lose takes years to replace, DLC's TreesDavidson program works today to assure the health of our tree canopy for future generations.

A collaborative program led by DLC and with support from the Town of Davidson, the Livability Board, Davidson College, and the community, TreesDavidson:

- works to assure the health of our tree canopy for today and for future generations;
- educates the community about tree care; and
- engages residents in volunteer tree planting events across Davidson.

Trees define our sense of place in Davidson—key to the beauty and character of the town and the college—but they also clean the air by filtering particulates, reduce stormwater run-off that carries pollutants like pesticides and fertilizers to streams, and cool our streets and homes to reduce energy use.

Enhanced Street Tree Program

Located in the public road right-of-way and generally planted between the curb and the sidewalk, street trees shade your walks and errands every day. In 2019, Bartlett Tree Experts updated our inventory, listing 1,750 street trees in the village area. With a grant awarded to the Town of Davidson by the North Carolina Forestry Service,

Bartlett will be working to expand that inventory in other areas of town. You can find the current street-tree inventory at arborscope.com/inventories/4132.

New and Improved Tree Ordinance

A recent overhaul of the Town tree ordinance strengthens tree-saving and planting requirements for real estate developments and widens required planting strips to accommodate larger trees. The enhancements expand the canopy and preserve the forest, recognizing the vital role of a town arborist as educator and facilitator of the ordinance. Look for the new ordinance on the Town website.

Community Engagement, Education, and Tree Planting

Building on the 500-plus trees planted so far, and with a generous gift from Davidson's Garden Club, TreesDavidson is planning several community tree planting events this fall and spring. Event locations include Fisher Farm, Abersham, the Bailey Springs affordable-housing sidewalk project, Davidson Rotary's Jackson Street project, and reforestation behind the Davidson K-8 School.

YOU Can Help

Want to help plant trees this fall? Planting trees is fun for families and all ages. Check davidsonlands.org for community tree planting events in October and November. We are also recruiting and training "TreeMasters" to help lead and manage community events. Stay in touch with all TreeDavidson activities at davidsonlands.org.



WINNERS OF DLC'S NATURE PHOTO CONTEST

One side-effect of the Coronavirus pandemic that can be viewed as a positive is increased time spent outdoors. Inspired by observing our community friends out in nature, DLC challenged you to submit your best, local nature photography. We received a wide scope of imagery that captured the essence of the diverse flora and fauna occupying our region. Competition was stiff, and we thank everyone who contributed their art.

CHILDREN'S CATEGORY WINNERS

1st place: Magnolia Blossom by Audrey May (11)
2nd place: Fuzzy Sun by Penelope Tew (7)
3rd place: Secret Garden by Teresa Lewis (14)
Honorable Mention: Cool Bug by Jordan Bullock (5)

ADULT'S CATEGORY WINNERS

1st place: Heron Taking Flight by Red Matthews
2nd place: Green Tree Frog by Allan White
3rd place: Eastern Tiger Swallowtail by Cindy Archer
Honorable Mention: Leaf with Water Droplets by Sarah Beam

Visit davidsonlands.org to see all the winners' photographs!



FIRST PLACE – KIDS

Audrey May (11), Magnolia Blossom



FIRST PLACE – ADULTS

Red Matthews, Heron Taking Flight

**The urban forest is important to our health
and the health of our wildlife and our ecosystems.**

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Sasha Hase, World of Wonder

Sasha's passion for nature and the outdoors led her to join WOW in the summer of 2019. Since then, she has been actively engaged in many of WOW's outreaches, events, and booth management at the Davidson Farmer's Market. Sasha believes WOW's outreach is critical not only to raise awareness for the beauty and importance of nature, but also to encourage the upcoming generation to take personal responsibility in protecting it.

*Sasha Hase, age 15, Class of 2022, dual enrollment
Arche Academy/Rowan-Cabarrus Community College*

**"The greatest threat to our planet
is the belief that someone else will
save it."** — Robert Swan, first person to walk both Poles





Aphids feasting on milkweed.



Soil bag experiments with native plants like coneflowers.

CONSERVATION CONNECTIONS

Predicting Patterns of Extinction

Research in a Davidson College biology lab connects directly to the stewardship and monitoring work being done by Davidson Lands Conservancy to assess the current ecological needs of lands we preserve and manage.

Associate Professor Kevin Smith and more than 15 students have been working on an ecological experiment to improve the prediction of extinction events as a result of major environmental disruptions. Erin Scott, Class of 2019, has now spent three summers on this project as a lab tech, working with current students to maintain and monitor 50 soil bags—miniature forests—each one meter in diameter, composed of artificial communities of North Carolina native-plant species in different densities. Species include milkweed, echinacea, prickly pear, and goldenrod. Common colonizers of these plant communities include monarch butterfly larvae, jumping spiders, ladybugs, and aphids.

Each summer, controlled mass extinctions of plant species are carried out by the team, replicating drought, habitat destruction, or biodiversity reduction resulting from invasive species.

Scott explains, “Destruction events like this are happening more and more frequently on a large scale due to urbanization, climate change, and other factors. To conserve the remaining habitat and to know where to focus our conservation efforts, it is important to get an idea of how species living in that remaining habitat react to the disturbance. Our experimental design allows to answer questions like: Do rare or common species go extinct following a disturbance? Is a more homogenous or more heterogeneous forest more resistant to disturbance?”

Knowing what traits or other factors might make a species vulnerable to local or more widespread extinction can inform our choices of how to protect and propagate species for climate change resiliency. Studies such as this one can guide management strategies to strengthen the resiliency of delicate ecosystems facing potential threats—and preserve our natural lands.

DLC’s 15th Annual Run for the Green may have been virtual, but we are literally thrilled with the results! To see our sponsors (thank you!) and results (congratulations!), visit runsignup.com/Race/NC/Davidson/RunForGreen.

Greenways and trails offer a safe route to key destinations around Davidson.



Nature on the GO!

World of Wonder—WOW— is a partnership between Davidson Lands Conservancy and Woodland Discovery *By Katie Noble*

World of Wonder was just getting geared up to hold our weekly, spring through fall, hands-on nature booth at the Davidson Farmers Market when COVID shut everything down. WOW committee members did indeed wonder, “How can we reach children staying at home and encourage spending time outdoors and learning about the natural world?”

Thus were born Nature WOW-NOW Kits, a “to-go” form of nature and science-based activity kits!

With help from local partners, including the Carolina Raptor Center that donated owl pellets for student dissection, we assembled nature activity bags for 60 children at Ada Jenkins for our first round. The kits included fun outdoor craft materials and science activities.

The Ada Jenkins Center’s summer interns, Kathryn Abely and Ben Baker, provided remote instruction to guide



Eli and Isaac Barsoum and Dane, Nolan and Eli Crandall helped assemble the nature kits for remote learners at the Ada Jenkins Center.

the children in using their supplies and tools. According to Kathryn, “They had a ton of fun and were really into the owl pellet dissection especially! They would excitedly poke around the pellet with the toothpicks and separate the bones from the hair/fur and then hold up what they found when I called out different types of bones, which was really cool to see!”

We gave our next round of bags—complete with DLC’s Backyard Books Bird edition and other bird-themed activities—to the 16 Pre-K students at Davidson Cornelius Child Development Center. The class took their bird guides to the Ada Jenkins pollinator garden and used them to identify nearby feathered friends.

One tenet of the Davidson Lands Conservancy mission is to foster a conservation ethic in our community, which we believe begins with an appreciation and love of nature. WOW and DLC aim to spark and share that love with children in our area.

We are grateful for community support and creative volunteers, including students from Davidson K-8 and Cannon School who helped assemble the bags. If you are interested in volunteering time or supplies for this effort, please contact wow.dlc@gmail.com.



The Importance of Local Conservation

Ethan Landen, a senior biology major at Davidson who has served as DLC's Roy Alexander Intern, offers this summary of his ongoing research on conservation issues in Davidson and the North Carolina Piedmont.

As the world population grows, there is more pressure to develop greater land for housing, agriculture, and businesses. The Southern Piedmont, ranging from Charlotte to Atlanta, is experiencing high rates of land-use change from rural and agriculture toward greater development for neighborhoods, commerce, and industry.

The fast rates of land consumption in this region are leading to greater stresses on infrastructure, natural lands and ecosystems, and local farms.

While the Town of Davidson has a sustainable approach to development, with many green spaces, parks, and the Davidson College ecological preserve, Charlotte's urban sprawl and pro-development policies are spreading to towns like ours, where ample space can support neighborhood developments. This direction is necessary to the growing



economy of metro Charlotte, but can outcompete balancing influences important to sustaining growth. My research explores how and if we can strike a balance with respect to natural ecology, sustainable planning, and consideration for the future—important aspects easily glossed over in the rush to grow and develop.