



Fact Sheet & Position Statement Regarding
A. Permanent Conservation of Abersham Park &
B. Assignment of Conservation Easement on Fisher Farm
As of September 8, 2022

Background

Abersham Park, with 345 acres, is owned by Mecklenburg County. This land was approved for residential development in the early 2000's, and was purchased in 2010 by the County during the recession. The Park is cooperatively managed by the Town and Mecklenburg County Park & Rec and is not protected from future development by a conservation easement.

Fisher Farm, adjacent to and south of Abersham, covers 200 acres and is owned by the Town of Davidson. Mecklenburg County holds a conservation easement on Fisher Farm; the conservation easement was required by the County as a condition of their partial funding for the Town's purchase of Fisher Farm. The County engages Davidson Lands Conservancy to monitor and steward the conservation easement.

Together, Abersham and Fisher Farm provide a regionally significant 545-acre park and nature preserve. The land is largely undeveloped excepting bike and hiking trails, limited access roads, parking areas, and a picnic shelter at Abersham. The land in its relative natural state is treasured locally, is vital to the community and the West Branch ecosystem, and is used extensively by nature lovers, walkers, bikers and bird watchers.

Stream Restoration of the West Branch Proposed

Mecklenburg County Storm Water Services plans to complete a stream restoration of the 1.5 miles of the West Branch along the western flank of both parks. This proposed project precipitated rigorous community interest because of the disruptive nature of project, including removal of vegetation in the stream corridor and substantial changes to the soils, stream and landscape.

In the interest of the community at large, a study group was formed in collaboration with the Town of Davidson, Mecklenburg County, Davidson College and Davidson Lands Conservancy. This community engagement process resulted in a number of recommendations to mitigate the project's impact on the stream corridor.

When the study group presented its recommendations to the public, each participant, without exception, voiced strong desire to conserve Abersham with a conservation easement to permanently keep the park in its natural state. This strong recommendation was among several resulting from the public review of the project.



A. Request for Permanent Conservation of Abersham Park

Placement of a conservation easement held by Davidson Lands Conservancy on Abersham will:

- Largely keep the Park in its natural state forever;
- Ensure the County does not sell Abersham Park without first offering it to the Town or the Conservancy;
- Provide the Conservancy with the opportunity to review future stream restoration or other reclamation projects on the land;
- Remove the ability of future Boards of County Commissioners to repurpose, develop, or sell Abersham Park;
- Provide for regular and rigorous monitoring and stewardship of the conservation easement by an independent land trust to protect the land's conservation values;
- Deter future condemnation or development of infrastructure through the Park; and
- Give Abersham the same status of protection as Fisher Farm to help keep the future of both assets in harmony.

B. Request assignment of the Fisher Farm Conservation Easement to DLC

DLC currently works in partnership with the Town of Davidson to monitor and steward the conservation easement on Fisher Farm and manage the Park for maximum benefit to the public and nature. DLC is also working closely with the Town on a long-term plan to re-wild parts of Fisher Farm.

Because Mecklenburg County, being both the holder of the conservation easement and the driver of the West Branch stream restoration project, amended the conservation easement to accommodate its planned West Branch restoration project. The County's conservation easement amendment removed the stream corridor from the easement coverage area to allow the planned project to move forward. Conservation easements are designed to be held by impartial third parties with sole intent to protect conservation values.

DLC monitors the Fisher Farm conservation easement at Mecklenburg County's request. As holder of the conservation easement, Mecklenburg County is subject to the legal obligations of the easement. Accordingly, these obligations create a liability to the County.

As an accredited land trust focused on local land conservation, greenways, wildlife habitat and tree canopy, DLC is best suited to hold, steward, monitor, and enforce the conservation easement. The Conservancy's holding of the easement would provide an important check and balance for all parties to ensure the conservation values of the land are protected in perpetuity.

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