



# Our Vital FARMLANDS

*DLC takes a leadership role to save the cultural heritage  
and environmental values of our region's farmlands* **BY BETH WYTIAZ**

I still remember the joy I felt as a child spending summers on my grandparents' farm. That love of farms has stuck with me all my life. Family and small farms are vital to our economy, wellbeing, history, culture, and environment. Agriculture is North Carolina's leading industry, although farmlands are under threat, and the state could lose more than one million acres of agriculture by 2040. Mecklenburg County has lost 20% of farmland in the last decade, leaving only 13,000 acres. At the same time, the interest in eating locally grown food continues to increase.

Davidson has roughly 10 farms comprising 1,000 acres in the eastern reaches of the town along Grey, East Rocky River, and Shearer Roads. Many of them have been operated by families for generations, but in some cases, the next generation is not planning to farm.

The confluence of aging landowners, lack of next-generation farmers, expanding development, population growth, and skyrocketing land values have led to this rapid loss of farmland. If this land is developed, its cultural heritage and environmental values will be lost, along with the potential to grow and raise food locally.

In recognition of this reality, local counties and municipalities are prioritizing farmland preservation, including Mecklenburg County with the Farmland Preservation Plan and the Town of Davidson with farmland policies, included in its Comprehensive Plan.

As a national organization, The Conservation Fund has launched the Carolina Farms Fund to preserve 5,000 acres

of farmland in the 15 Charlotte area counties. Tim Belk has stepped in to chair the effort, with the first deal completed to support the expansion of Deep Roots CPS Farm. The program focuses on purchasing and permanently protecting farmland, then transferring ownership to the new farmer selected to farm the land. Similar efforts have been successful in Chicago and Atlanta.

DLC is building relationships with these organizations and with Davidson farmers. We have found real interest in preserving some of these farms and cultivating local food production, and know that each unique situation requires a deep understanding of the landowner's needs. With land values at \$100,000 an acre in Davidson, it will be challenging and capital intensive to protect these farmlands.

Because DLC sees the vital importance in protecting this part of our Davidson culture, we are leading these efforts locally. This significant undertaking involves bringing together a variety of partners to secure the funding and resources needed—and we believe success is possible.

## YOU Can Help

Protecting these lands will take all of us, so if you would like to help today, consider donating to our Land Conservation Fund at [davidsonlands.org/give-today](https://davidsonlands.org/give-today).



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 habitat.

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ed Harris, President  
Cindy McIntosh, Vice President  
Bonnie Newell, Secretary  
Brent Evans, Treasurer  
Janet Andersen  
Gordon Clark  
Matt Dellinger  
Paul Freestone  
John V. Griffith  
Pam Hay  
Tom Shandley  
Scott Tew  
Charlotte Welsby

#### STAFF

Beth Wytiaz, Executive Director  
[beth@davidsonlands.org](mailto:beth@davidsonlands.org)  
Carly Schiano, Community Engagement  
[carly@davidsonlands.org](mailto:carly@davidsonlands.org)  
Misty Davis, Special Programs  
[misty@davidsonlands.org](mailto:misty@davidsonlands.org)  
Dave Cable, Senior Advisor  
[dave@davidsonlands.org](mailto:dave@davidsonlands.org)  
Zee Berl, Pro Bono Consultant  
[scwb46@gmail.com](mailto:scwb46@gmail.com)

#### CONTACT

P.O. Box 1952  
Davidson, NC 28036  
[dlc@davidsonlands.org](mailto:dlc@davidsonlands.org)  
704-892-1910  
[davidsonlands.org](http://davidsonlands.org)



### Our Four Pillars of Success

- **Conserve & Steward Land**
- **Preserve & Enhance Tree Canopy**
- **Expand Greenways & Trails**
- **Preserve Wildlife Habitats**

## FROM THE BOARD

# DLC is Grateful to Retiring Board Members

BY ED HARRIS

*Three board members complete their second terms this year, ending a six-year commitment to DLC. Board Chair Ed Harris asked each one three questions: What brought you to DLC initially; what experiences made you glad/happy/proud to have been on the board; and what advice would you give someone considering joining the DLC board?*



#### Janet Anderson

I'd supported conservation through financial donations and lived in the ETJ section of Davidson, an area that needed representation on the board. The board members were passionate about conservation but weren't always clear about how best to apply that passion. That changed under Dave Cable's leadership as executive director. I am most proud of what has been accomplished in my six years. My advice to a newcomer is not to be intimidated. We are a passionate group of focused and driven volunteers. Everyone on the board will gladly help you get your feet on the ground. I look forward to continuing to support the DLC any way I can.



#### Gordon Clark

My initial connection to DLC was pitching the idea to partner with Trees Davidson to improve our tree canopy. My two terms on the board have been not only rewarding, but also fun. I'm proud that with the support of our community we have advanced our mission to conserve and protect the natural resources of our community. If you feel called to join the board, roll up your sleeves and embrace the opportunity to make a difference not only now, but for years to come.



#### Paul Freestone

Retiring from full-time work, I evaluated my core beliefs. I grew up where I could enjoy forests and streams and always sought out trails and natural areas when I was traveling around the world. DLC's work clearly aligned with many of my passions, and I wanted to learn more and help however I could. It didn't hurt that Run for Green was taking place right after we moved to town, and the course went very close to our house. Rewarding experiences: Starting with the Forever Fund challenge, seeing that "proof of concept" through a transformational capital campaign with Now and Forever. Also, the ongoing community celebration that Run for Green enables each year. Advice: Get out early and often to help monitor properties and/or evaluate potential conservation land parcels. And read Douglas Tallamy, American entomologist, ecologist, and conservationist.



# Nature Cultivation and Preservation

In July 2000, the 501c3 incorporation of the Davidson Lands Conservancy (DLC) became official, thanks to the work of a small group of Davidson citizens. The documentation showing the listed founders includes Ron Charbonneau, Lynn Henderson, Chris Sekerak, Martha Strawn, and Robert Cumming. The effort to form DLC was encouraged by then-mayor Randall Kincaid, due to concern around increasing development pressure.

As we plan to celebrate our 25th anniversary milestone, we've learned that many others contributed to launching DLC. We are so grateful for their many contributions and will share more about this in 2025. Since its founding, DLC has grown to be an integral part of the community, driving forward land conservation and stewardship; supporting the growth and management of our parks,

trails, and greenways; monitoring and enhancing our urban forest and tree canopy; restoring and preserving wildlife habitats; and providing experiential educational opportunities for people of all ages and abilities. As we enter 2025 and DLC's 25th year, it is important that we properly acknowledge and share stories that highlight the various ways in which DLC has made an impact on you, our community, and the environment.

To do this, we want to hear from you! At our recent board retreat we shared in a word what DLC meant to each of us. Our words included nature, hope, partnership, passion, impact, gratitude, conservation, community, and teamwork. The DLC will celebrate 25 years because of your amazing support, so please take a few minutes to share your thoughts on the questions below

via the QR code. You can also reach out directly to Executive Director Beth Wytiaz to share your stories at [beth@davidsonlands.org](mailto:beth@davidsonlands.org) or 704-421-0979. We are developing a small task force to finalize our 25th anniversary programming, so contact Beth if you are interested in participating. We look forward to hearing from you and together honoring this important milestone for DLC and our community.

- In a word, what does DLC mean to you?
- How have you participated in DLC to date?
- How would you like to see the DLC recognize its 25th anniversary?
- What stories or experiences with DLC would you like to share?
- What would you like DLC to do in the future as we look to the next 25 years?



**As we enter 2025 and DLC's 25th year, it is important that we properly acknowledge and share stories that highlight the various ways in which DLC has made an impact on you, our community, and the environment.**



## Now & Forever Campaign Close to Reaching Goal

We are almost there! DLC is within \$150,000 of reaching our goal of \$1,750,000 for the Now & Forever campaign, which we hope to complete in the upcoming months. This campaign was launched in 2022 to support land conservation needs and to help ensure the longevity of DLC. Thank you to those that have already made a pledge or contributed, we are incredibly grateful for your support. If you haven't yet contributed and would like to help reach this goal, visit [davidsonlands.org/give-today](https://davidsonlands.org/give-today) or contact Beth Wytiaz at 704-421-0979 or [beth@davidsonlands.org](mailto:beth@davidsonlands.org).



## TREASURE TREES

# Celebrating Our ECOLOGICAL HERITAGE

BY BRENT EVANS

The Davidson Treasure Trees Program connects the community with the remarkable trees that shape our town's landscape and history. This urban forestry program sponsored by Trane Technologies highlights trees of cultural and ecological significance, focusing on their physical features and the unique stories they hold.

### What is a Treasure Tree?

A Treasure Tree is more than just a large or unique tree; it's a

living piece of Davidson's heritage. The program identifies original Treasure Trees and shares their stories, while recognizing a new generation of special trees. These include trees that are physically unique, a rare species, or those with significant cultural or historical importance.

Local tree enthusiasts, private arborists, Davidson College representatives, and Davidson Lands Conservancy staff collaborate to identify and catalog these remarkable trees,

ensuring their stories are preserved for future generations.

### How It Works

Residents can nominate a tree by submitting basic details such as height, diameter, crown spread, location, and any known history or stories associated with it. The tree's overall score is determined using a formula established by the American Forests Champion Tree program. The Davidson Tree Council meets quarterly to review the nominations and compare them to the current inventory.

### Get Involved and Learn More

The program invites residents to look for signs on designated trees around town. Each sign includes a QR code that can be scanned to learn more about the tree's significance and story.

For those interested in learning more or nominating a tree, visit [davidsonlands.org/treasure-trees](https://davidsonlands.org/treasure-trees). The program is not just about the trees, but also about the people and history of Davidson. By involving the community in nominating trees, sharing their stories, and photographing them, the program aims to increase awareness of our urban forest and the special trees that are part of it.



## MEET OUR *100<sup>th</sup>* TREASURE TREE

The 100th Treasure Tree is a magnificent Silver Maple located at Davidson United Methodist Church. This tree stands as a testament to the rich natural history that surrounds us and represents the community's dedication to preserving these natural treasures.

DAVIDSON LANDS  
CONSERVANCY  
[DavidsonLands.org](https://davidsonlands.org)

**TREASURE  
TREE**



Scan code  
with camera

## FOUR FALL TREECARE TIPS

Fall is the perfect time to plant a new tree, so here are some tips on how to enhance the health of young saplings.

**Water.** Watering is the most critical part of tree care, especially during dry spells. Providing extra water helps to ensure a tree's survival, even when vulnerable to stress.

**Mulch.** Using mulch strengthens a young tree by retaining moisture and providing insulation. Layer 2–4 inches around the tree, making sure to leave space around the trunk. Avoid the "mulch volcano" that smothers the trunk and opt for the "mulch donut" shape. This simple step doubles tree growth rates.

**Compost.** An occasional layer of compost improves drainage as well as soil nutrients. Young trees respond well to slow-release fertilizers like compost, and you can make it yourself!

**Wait to prune.** Open cuts from pruning can spread fungal infections and diseases. Pruning in the late winter gives the tree time to heal before its new growth and pest season.

—Jazlyn Moock,  
Davidson College,  
Roy Alexander Intern 2024

## RUN FOR GREEN A Moving Tribute of DLC's Work

On September 28, 2024, nearly 700 runners gathered in Davidson for DLC's 19th Annual Run For Green. With 5k, 10k, and half-marathon courses winding through the picturesque streets and greenways of Davidson, Run For Green is not only a beloved annual tradition for runners of all skill levels, but also a great way for the local community to support DLC's mission to conserve local lands and natural resources, connect lives to nature, and promote a conservation ethic. We employ this ethic in the race through our commitment to recycling, compostable cups and giving away over 200 tree saplings to our winners and other participants. DJ Don Stedem and announcer Dave Gilpin created a fun, festive atmosphere throughout the morning, King Canary Brewery hosted the race packet pick-up and provided post-race refreshments for runners, and a wonderful time was had by all.

We are so grateful to all of our event participants and volunteers, and for the generous support of our sponsors, without whom Run for Green wouldn't get past the starting line. A huge amount of gratitude goes to Trane Technologies, our title sponsor, along with the rest of the sponsors shown below. This race could not be staged without their generosity.



Gary Smith and DLC  
Executive Director  
Beth Wytiaz



© SUNNY SNEARY, INDELIBLE IMPRINTS





# Conservancy CAMP

## *DLC Launches Successful Summer Program*

Connecting young people with nature is more important than ever, as the time kids spend outside has plummeted to fewer than 10 minutes a day, in comparison with seven hours of screen time a day, according to WebMD. DLC offers many programs to address this issue, including World of Wonder's education programs; Freedom School (see below); and service-learning projects—but we wanted to expand our summer offerings. Out of this, Conservancy Camp was born.

The week-long conservation camp ran three times throughout the summer, serving 12 to 15 campers, 7 to 12 years old. Each day focused on a different DLC pillar: land, trees, animal habitats, and trails/greenways, and included special guests, games, and art and service projects.

The campers and counselors spent their days exploring the natural world in local parks and greenways. The young conservationists:

- designed and built miniature replicas of their ideal parks;
- turned over rocks in a stream and found crawfish and salamanders;



- went on a hunt to find a pirate's treasure and discovered it was trees; and
- “jailed” invasive plant species for being dangerous to the forest floor.

Our intelligent, curious campers amazed head counselors Phoebe Notte and Claire Alexander, who were key to the success of camp.

“It was a great camp with energetic and passionate counselors. The kids loved being in nature and I loved that there was a service component,” said parent Claire Schmidt.



## **FREEDOM SCHOOL** **Students Enjoy the Wonder of the Natural World**

This summer, DLC taught natural science to young scholars attending the Brenda H. Tapia CDF Freedom Schools at Davidson College summer enrichment camps held on the Ada Jenkins Center campus. Originally developed in the 1990s to address education inequality, Freedom School provides community-focused summer enrichment for area scholars in kindergarten through eighth grade.

DLC provided environmental education lessons on pollination, biodiversity, pollution, and local food webs, using nature walks, labs, and crafts to make learning fun and accessible. The scholars' favorite activities included a tree scavenger hunt, dissecting pine cones and flowers, and fishing with dip nets at the Roosevelt Wilson pond. DLC looks forward to many more summers with the Freedom School scholars.

## UPDATE FALL STEWARDSHIP

# Caring for the Land

BY JANET ANDERSEN

What's the weather? Which property are we stewarding? Who is the monitoring team? These are a few of the questions I ask myself as I prepare to leave the house. Weather and property will determine the number of layers to wear and which boots to select. The monitoring team is a mixture of experienced monitors, landowners, and volunteers wanting to experience one of the properties DLC is responsible for stewarding.

Annually DLC is required to "steward" or monitor properties for which we hold an easement or a monitoring agreement with a private party like the Pines. DLC is responsible for monitoring 14 properties in Mecklenburg, Cabarrus, and Iredell counties.

On the scheduled monitoring date a small team of volunteers and board members heads to the designated property and monitors it by walking the circumference. With a backpack of supplies (new conservation signs, aluminum nails, flagging ribbon, and numbered medallions), an iPad, maps, previous site reports, and a trusty GPS system,

the crew heads out into nature. During the walk, the team views the property to ensure that the conservation values are maintained. We ask ourselves: "Has there been encroachment by neighboring properties, are all the signs in place, does the flagging have to be replaced, are there changes of any kind from the original and previous reports, are there invasive species of note?" Anomalies are noted on maps and that and other items of note are translated into a final report. The final report is shared with the landowner and kept as required for future reference.

As a member of the stewardship committee for the last five years, I have had the pleasure to walk nearly every property, every year. Hours exploring and walking through these lands that mean so much to the landowners has been a privilege I get to enjoy every year.



## The Pines

### *DLC Partnership Celebrates 10 years*

The Davidson Lands Conservancy began partnering with The Pines at Davidson in 2014 to help monitor their undeveloped land. Each year, DLC leadership and volunteers walk the property to detail the unique characteristics of the 84-acre property. The ecological values of these lands are high, including riparian ecosystems, wildlife habitat, forest cover, biodiversity, connectivity to other conserved lands, and prime agricultural soils.

This process allows us to document the most valuable natural assets and note any changes in the property's condition. Through this process DLC provides advice in best managing the land. Veron Baker, CEO and President of The Pines notes, "We value our partnership with DLC in helping to understand and best steward our lands, especially as we look to our future."



© MICHAEL LOBIONDO PHOTOGRAPHY, INC.

In addition to stewardship, we also partner with The Pines in other ways, including residents lending their time, and expertise to support our work, providing financial support to drive forward our mission, as well as DLC staff bringing educational opportunities to The Pines. We are tremendously grateful for this long-standing partnership and look forward to continuing to grow and cultivate these important relationships that have been integral in advancing DLC and local conservation.





P.O. Box 1952  
Davidson, NC 28036

## Know Our Parks?

Among Davidson's greatest assets are its parks, diverse ecological treasures nestled in various corners of our town. Part of DLC's mission includes helping steward these parks. Whether it's trail maintenance, invasive species removal, or tree plantings, DLC and its volunteer workforce contributes hundreds of hours each year to foster these green spaces.

See if you can identify Davidson's four most popular parks pictured on this page.



2



3



4



1

**ANSWERS:** 1. Lake Davidson Nature Preserve  
2. Fisher Farm Park 3. Beaty Park 4. Roosevelt Wilson Park