


# DURHAM COUNTY MATCHING GRANTS PROGRAM REPORT



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 Open Space and Real Estate Division

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# Milestone

## Durham County Matching Grants Program 1991 - 2023

Since 1991, the matching grants program has assisted **67 nonprofit organizations** in Durham County to preserve open space and promote new or improved recreational opportunities for citizens.

With a **2.18 million investment**, the program has funded projects totaling over **7.65 million** to benefit Durham County.

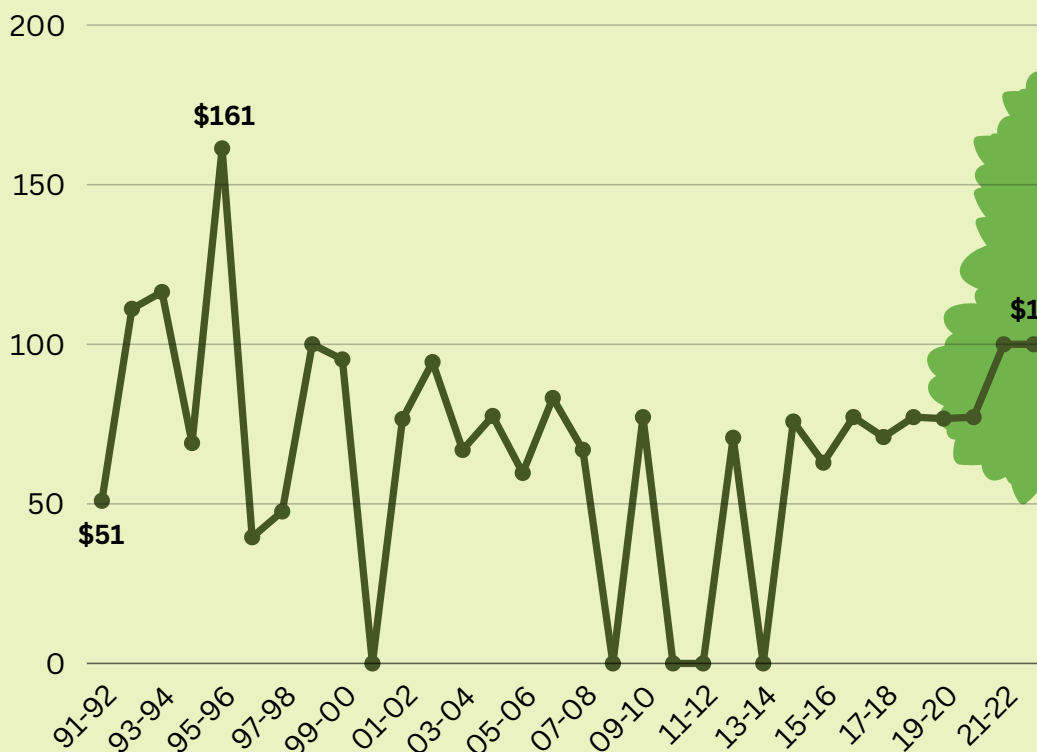


Durham  
Central  
Park  
Bridge

The grant program has supported a wide range of projects, totaling 122, each with its unique contribution to our community. From acquiring an environmentally significant natural area to building a playground and trail on publicly owned lands, these projects inspire hope and promise for our community's future.

### Footage of The Matching Grant Program

Thousand \$



Year 1991 to 2023

2001, 2009, 2011, 2012:  
The matching grant program is  
suspended due to budget cuts

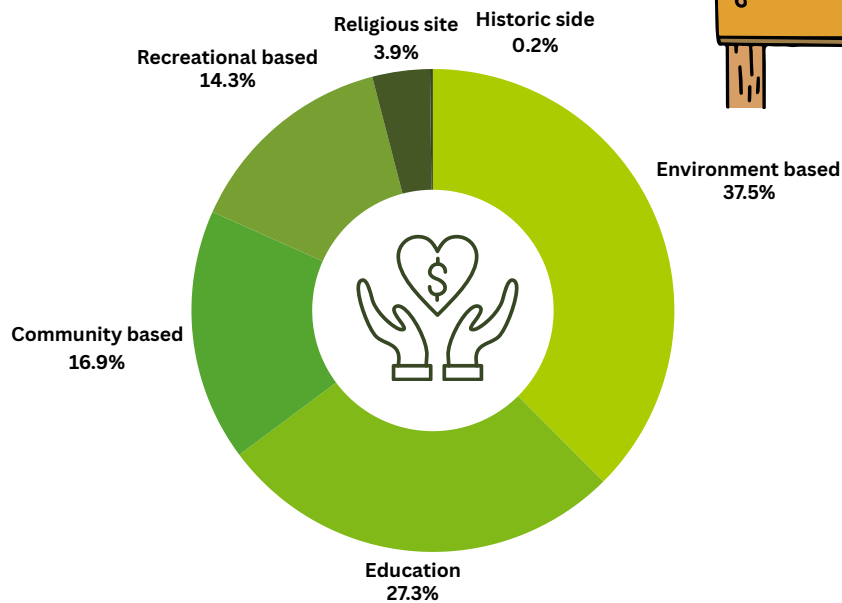
In 2014 there are two projects  
withdrawn: Museum of Durham  
History (\$535) and Eno River  
Association (\$12,400)

In 2018, Triangle Greenways Council  
project was withdrawn for \$35,000

Most of the matching grants were awarded to environmental and educational-based entities who provided **64.8% of project costs**. Elementary school PTAs were the most-funded educational entity (\$339,255) where funds went to build and improve outdoor playground spaces.

Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association (ECWA) and Eno River Association, two local non-profit land trusts, have been awarded the most grants. ECWA and the Eno River Association have received grants for land acquisition, trail construction, and trail improvement projects.

## The Matching Grant Group Recipient



## Top Matching Grant Recipient

**\$342,706**

Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association (ECWA)

**\$212,059**

Eno River Association

**\$97,351**

Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail

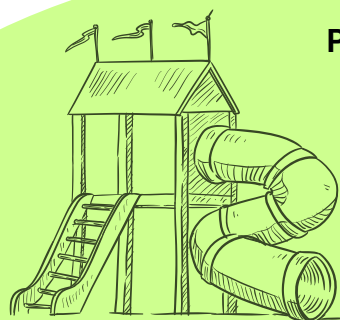
**\$84,175**

Urban Community Agronomics (UCAN)

**\$82,519**

El Futuro

## What's been funded?



Playground and tot lot projects included building and improving the playground, renovation, redesign, and restoration.

Most of these grants were received by schools (\$411,828) and community-based groups (\$185,752).



**Land purchases preserve nature, maintain historical and cultural sites, promote healthy lifestyles, connect people with nature, and provide outdoor educational spaces.**

Land acquisition projects were more common in the early years of the Matching Grants program. The Eno River Association and ECWA have received o\$342,715 and \$114,819, respectively, for land purchase.

**The Matching Grants Program has awarded \$310,705 for trail projects, including building, expanding, and restoring the trails and supporting facilities.**



The Durham Parks Foundation, Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail and Durham Central Park are the top three awardees for trail and recreational amenities receiving a total of \$110,765. In addition, ECWA and Urban Community Agronomics (UCAN) have been granted awards for trail and recreation amenties.



**Garden, park, recreational, and outdoor greenspaces provide important community benefits.**

South Eastern Efforts Developing Sustainable Spaces, Inc (SEEDS), Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail, and El Futuro have received grants for outdoor community garden spaces..



**El Futuro Play Space**



# Success Story

## Durham County Matching Grants Program 2014 - 2023

The organization awarded the grant must start the project twelve months after the date of the final contract with Durham County and complete it twenty-four months later. However, there have been cases where the organization has withdrawn the grants. After completing the project, the organization must maintain it for at least ten years from the contract date.

**The matching grant program awarded \$717,900 for the last ten years to help realize a \$3,07 million project or 23.4% of the total project cost.** Only \$35,000 was withdrawn from the total grant in the land purchase.

**All projects funded under the matching grant program are strategically aligned with the goals of the Durham Open Space and Trail Commission (DOST),** ensuring that the program's support is directly contributing to the commission's objectives.

### Durham Open Space and Trail Commission (DOST) Goals

Preserve the environmentally significant sites, the County's scenic river corridors, particularly the Eno River, the Little River, the Flat River, and the New Hope Creek, critical environmental lands, such as wetlands and watershed areas, lands which represent Durham's rural heritage, important farmland, scenic roads, and essential historic open space areas.

Provide opportunities for greenways, trails, and rails-to-trails linkages throughout the County.

Support the provision of active recreation areas.

Educate and involve the citizenry of Durham County on the importance of preserving open space lands within the County.

Assist in the preservation and long-term protection of existing areas in Durham County that are presently used for passive or active recreation.

**El Futuro is a community-based non-profit organization that focuses on Latino-serving mental health care in North Carolina and beyond.** El Futuro aims to support the Latino family with mental health needs to get appropriate services and function at their most vibrant at home, work, and school, strengthening our entire community. Learn more about El Futuro on the [El Futuro website](#).

El Futuro has received grants for its multiple-year project. El Futuro has transitioned an area behind the El Futuro clinic into a vibrant, welcoming, therapeutic garden and play space for the diverse families of the Tuscaloosa-Lakewood communities. **With total grants of \$82,519, El Futuro established a community garden, walking path, and playground with a total project cost of \$204,470.**

*“When we initially envisioned what our community truly needed, we quickly realized that our funding was insufficient to make it a reality. The support from the Durham Open Space and Trails (DOST) Commission has been instrumental in elevating our project to its current level. Without this funding, we would not have been able to enhance our space as significantly as we have. The flexibility to utilize the funds over a two-year period is particularly beneficial, allowing us to be more responsive to the community’s evolving needs.*

*Additionally, the opportunity to apply for funding annually has provided us with consistent support and the ability to plan long-term improvements. Beyond financial assistance, we have greatly appreciated the ability to seek advice and consult on various questions, which has been invaluable. The matching grant has also allowed us to leverage other funding sources effectively, maximizing the impact of every dollar we receive.”*

**Mary Jones, Director of Client Care and Engagement of El Futuro**

*“El Futuro is dedicated to serving the Latino community, and this space was created with significant involvement from the Latino community to reflect cultural aspects of Latin America. The improved space offers a welcoming environment that resonates with their cultural backgrounds, providing a sense of home and belonging. Many families in our community lack access to green spaces in their homes or neighborhoods. By enhancing our therapeutic Green Space, which includes features like a creek, a community garden, a treehouse, and backhill terraces, we are not only making Durham more beautiful and appealing to both locals and visitors, but we are also promoting mental health and well-being for everyone who visits. These spaces encourage social connections, parent-child bonding, creativity, curiosity, outdoor activity, cultural pride and a deeper connection to nature and oneself. All of these elements are fundamental to overall well-being and mental health. The DOST support has been crucial in making this vision a reality, and we are deeply grateful for the continued partnership and support.”*

**Mary Jones, Director of Client Care and Engagement of El Futuro**





**UCAN is a non-profit organization that wants to engage the community of Northern Durham with skills based in agriculture and provide a place for those within the community to access fresh fruits and vegetables.** UCAN aims to improve our community's health and wellness by educating on healthy lifestyles, seed-to-table food preparation and preservation, and hands-on STEM and agricultural skills. Learn more about UCAN on the [UCAN website](#).

*“The Durham Open Space and Trails Matching Grant Projects made it possible for UCAN to reclaim a former plantation, most recently a neglected farmstead, into a place where residents now have access to land that had not been touched in over seventy years. The historic significance of this place we call the Catawba Trail Farm includes a section of the Great Native American Trading Path which leads to the Little River, the oldest marked gravesite in Durham County and most recently the discovery of a gravesite of the enslaved people who lived and toiled on this land. Without the Matching Grant project we would not have been able to restore several old buildings, giving them new life and purpose as we acknowledge their past.”*

**Delphine Sellar, Executive Director of UCAN**

UCAN has been awarded grants in multiple years since 2014 with **total grants of \$84,175 for projects valued at \$294,068 on the Catawba Trail Farm**. UCAN wants to provide Durham County residents with a rural community agriculture and historical center that includes farming, trails, open spaces, and more.

Catawba Trail Farm is off Snow Hill Road, near Little River Elementary School, Durham Community College, North Durham Campus, and Lucas Middle School.

*“Because of the matching grant project UCAN's Catawba Trail Farm has become a destination place where people come not just to learn how to grow their own vegetables but to learn of the history of the land, enjoy the natural environment, and can take an active role in the conservation and preservation of this unspoiled wooded, green space.”*

**Delphine Sellars, Executive Director of UCAN**



*“The community now have access to a safe place where they can walk the trails, enjoy the beauty of nature, learn of the native plants and trees and enjoy the scenic views of the Little River. The benefits to the community is a place where they can learn about conservation, connect education to real life experiences and actively engage in the preservation of our limited natural resources. Because of the Matching Grant project we now have schools bringing their students, groups coming to explore the land, engagement with universities who are assisting us in learning of the topography, etc. This is now a place where a diverse community of people come to learn from each other. It's a place of healing and peace for all people.”*

**Delphine Sellars, Executive Director of UCAN**



## **Eno River Association**

**The Eno River Association has helped protect over 7,500 acres of open, natural space in the Eno River Basin since 1966.** Thanks to partnerships with local and state agencies, nearly three-quarters of this land is open to the public for low-impact recreation and nature study, a unique feature among land trusts like ours.

Established in 1966, the Eno River Association is an accredited land trust and conservation nonprofit organization that is driven by a mission to conserve and protect the natural, historical, and cultural resources of the Eno River Basin. Learn more about Eno River Association in the **[Eno River Association website](#)**.

*“Funding from Durham Open Space and Trails grant is supporting a project by the Eno River Association to purchase a publicly-accessible trail easement along the Eno River, enhance the ecologically important of our Blue Indigo Nature Preserve and Rocky Branch Conservation Area as a community resource, and fostering relationships to build community support and understanding of this important area of Durham. DOST funds provided us the necessary funding to complete this project and provided our organization the staff support funding necessary to have meaningful engagement to ensure we were providing the resources important to the community”*

**Kim Livingston, Director of Conservation and Stewardship  
Eno River Association**



The Eno River Association has been a grant recipient since the early days of the matching grant program. In the program's early years, the Eno River Association used the grant to expand land preservation in the Eno River Basin. A recent grant was awarded in 2018 for installing a durable canoe/kayak launch on the Eno River in West Point above the dam. **With \$17,991, the matching grant program realized the project with a total cost of \$41,182. This project created a safe and conducive entrance or egress from boats and made it accessible for those with disabilities.**

*“This project supports the community by doubling the length of a trail in our Blue Indigo Preserve and enhancing the NC Mountains-to-Sea Trail in our Rocky Branch Conservation Area. A primary goal of our work in these preserves is to provide safe and comfortable outdoor resources to improve physical and mental health for neighbors and create a sense of understanding and ownership. These preserves serve neighborhoods that are historically underrepresented in outdoor spaces and disproportionately threatened by the impacts of climate change and development. This project is providing community determined educational experiences centered around fostering comfort and belonging in natural spaces and educational signage highlighting the unique ecosystems found within these preserves while protecting more open space along the Eno River ensuring climate and flood resilience.”*

**Kim Livingston, Director of Conservation and Stewardship  
Eno River Association**



**Mountains  
to Sea  
Trail  
Bridge  
over Falls  
Lake**



# Moving Forward

## Durham County Matching Grants Program

Small organizations with excellent projects often need more resources to fulfill the application process. Durham Open Space and Trails Commission (DOST) is eager to **make the grant more accessible so that more organizations can apply and fund more projects**. In Fiscal Year 2023 - 2024, DOST released **Priority Project Areas** to reach a broader applicant target.

### PRIORITY PROJECT AREAS

DOST allow qualifying projects within priority focus areas for up to \$5,000 using a **simplified application** with a reduced applicant match of 25% (county matching funds are 75%)

Interested groups may apply for projects in these areas even if **they do not currently hold formal non-profit status**

Eligible projects must be located within a census tract **area where households are earning less than 80% of Area Median Income (AMI)**



Learn more on [Durham County Matching Grant Program Guidelines and Application Instructions](#)

