

# Harmonious and Respectful Development

**OBJECTIVE:** We need to build in harmony with the environment in a way that respects, protects, and regenerates the environment for the benefit of all living things. We need to design new development to protect our remaining natural areas, including wetlands, floodplains, lakes, rivers, streams, mature forests, and the native plants and animals that rely on them to live. We need to stop development practices that contribute to loss of biodiversity and to manage the landscape in ways that promote a healthy environment. We need to protect the plants, animals, and insects that are native to Durham and essential for all life and restore them when possible. We need green infrastructure to protect residents and the environment from the effects of pollution and flooding. Whenever possible, we need to make use of the resources we already have, like existing buildings and infrastructure, so that we do not have to always create new things from scratch.

**BACKGROUND:** As land in the central parts of Durham has filled up with development, there is increasing pressure to build on cheaper land on the outskirts of the city. This brings development closer to farmland, lakes, rivers, streams, and other sensitive environmental areas. As this kind of development occurs, the backbone of our natural communities and corridors is disrupted and fragmented, leaving only small pockets of non-biodiverse nature that will eventually disappear entirely. Native plants have been increasingly replaced with those not native to Piedmont North Carolina, and in many cases these non-native plants are invasive, and displace native plants over time. Remaining undeveloped land in Durham often has steep slopes, extensive floodplains and streams, and mature forests. Currently, new development strips the land of natural features by removing trees and disrupting streams with new infrastructure and buildings. Some residents experience downstream flooding as new development occurs, leading to standing water or property damage. Within our community there are places that are underutilized, with large amounts of the land dedicated to parking, commercial strip malls, and very low-density development. These areas are valuable for Durham residents, given their proximity to businesses, schools, work places, and City and County infrastructure and services.

We want to prioritize protecting the environment and existing farmland when new development occurs—including protecting residents from adverse flooding impacts. We want to ensure new construction works harmoniously with the environment, by focusing on filling in underused land while preserving natural areas, and efficient and sustainable building design.

## Quotes from Durham Residents

“Concerned because with all this new development coming into Durham we’re building out toward the county. We’re concerned about the waterways. We’re in the Ellerbe creek watershed and we want thicker buffers between the construction and the watershed. When you mess with the waterway – you’re messing with the ecosystem and the animals in the system.”

“Like with the new affordable houses – what about the green infrastructure pieces; how the new houses might increase flooding on the older houses already in the community.”

“I have concerns about the new houses that are being built and how they are contributing to the flooding in the neighborhood. Are they following the best practices to install and build them as it relates to flooding and runoff? My inclination is that they are not. There needs to be thought given to how the new houses affect other properties.”

“Lots of trees, I don't like clearcutting for development. I understand the need for density in some places. I hate the way Raleigh is sprawled. I love that in Durham, I can be in the woods in 15 minutes.”

“environmental protections are almost non-existent for sensitive natural areas-Developers are allowed to cut down forests with almost no restriction”

“Strongly agree. No more cheap buildings and homes. We need to update and maintain historic infrastructure. Usually older buildings are better quality anyway & built for longevity (even if they need some work)”