



CITY OF DURHAM
Office of Public Affairs
101 CITY HALL PLAZA
DURHAM, NC 27701

News Media Contact:

Amy Blalock
Public Affairs Manager
(919) 560-4123 x 11253
(919) 475-7735 (cell)

Amy.Blalock@DurhamNC.gov
<http://Facebook.com/CityofDurhamNC>
<http://Twitter.com/CityofDurhamNC>
<http://Instagram.com/CityofDurhamNC>
<http://YouTube.com/CityofDurhamNC>

News Release

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Share! #Durham releases first-ever Sustainability Report of all programs & environmental milestones #SustainaBullCity

Durham Releases First-Ever Sustainability Report

Report Informs How City Now Moves Forward

DURHAM, N.C. – Residents interested in learning how the City of Durham is ensuring environmental stewardship, social responsibility and economic prosperity will want to read the City's first-ever [Sustainability Report](#).

Since the early 1980's, the City has implemented multiple sustainability programs, policies and services that focus on meeting the needs of current residents without compromising the needs of future generations. The purpose of this report is to communicate the City's sustainability story so far, and to inform a strategic path forward.

The report, created by the City's General Services Department and the City/County Sustainability Office in partnership with all City departments, includes a timeline of major environmental milestones, baseline measures for key indicators such as greenhouse gas emissions, tree canopy and residential water use as well as highlights sustainability programs and accomplishments across multiple City departments. The report covers current initiatives, programs and policies related to climate and energy, the built environment, natural systems, economy and jobs, arts and community, equity and empowerment, and innovation.

Some highlights from the report include:

- Durham has seen a 7 percent decrease in residential greenhouse gas emissions since 2008, despite the population growing 10 percent during this time.
- Durham has the second oldest park system in North Carolina with 50 percent of residents living within ½ mile of a park.

- Durham residents use 23 percent less water than the average North Carolinian in large part due to City-led water conservation programs focused on customer awareness, water-efficiency devices and fixtures and programmatic incentives.
- A recent tree canopy study found that Durham has a 52 percent tree canopy and has planted over 3,000 trees since 2014.
- City buildings are 13 percent more energy efficient today than they were in 2009 due to lighting upgrades, replacing old heating and air conditioning units, and adding automatic controls on systems to turn off when not in use.
- A commitment to providing diverse transportation choices for residents, including biking, walking and public transportation options, has resulted in increases in bus services, 575 miles of sidewalk, and 40 miles of bike lanes.
- Durham's program to help remove barriers to the development of brownfield sites has encouraged redevelopment of vacant sites that may be contaminated with pollutants.
- Durham has a strong arts community representing approximately 4.2 percent of all business in the county according to the Local Arts Index.

According to Sustainability Specialist Erin Victor with the [City's General Services Department](#), taken together the components of this report tell a story of how Durham is becoming a better, more sustainable community for its current population and for future generations. "In addition to shedding light on Durham's recent accomplishments, the information will help inform a comprehensive Sustainability Plan," said Victor. "By reflecting on our progress we can identify new opportunities to make Durham an even more resilient and sustainable city."

The [Sustainability Plan](#), under development this year, will assist the City in meeting objectives in Goal 5 of the Strategic Plan: [stewardship of physical and environmental assets](#). This report, in combination with the data-driven framework provided by the [STAR Community Rating System](#), will help inform a strategic path forward for the City's sustainability efforts. Residents are encouraged to weigh in on priorities for the future of Durham by taking the [online survey](#) or attending an event to be announced later this fall.

To read the report and provide input on future priorities, visit the [City's website](#) or contact Victor at (919) 560-4197, ext. 21244 or by [email](#).

About the City of Durham General Services Department

The [General Services Department](#) creates, manages and maintains City properties to provide best value to the Durham community. The core business functions include: Administration/Business Services, Facilities Operations, Landscape Services, Urban Forestry, Real Estate, Project Management, Cemeteries, and Keep Durham Beautiful. As guided by the City's [Strategic Plan](#), General Services serves as a steward of the City's physical and environmental assets. Through annual and long-range facility planning activities, the department plans, provides, and maintains the City's facilities infrastructure, which supports the community's quality of life and serves as a foundation of a healthy economy.

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